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The Feminist Portrayal of Snow White in ABC's *Once Upon a Time*

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Chapter 1: Snow White as a Feminist Character.....	15
Chapter 2: The Feminist Transformation Of Mary Margaret	41
Works Cited.....	74

Introduction:

Ever since I was young, I have been intrigued by Disney films. One of the reasons was because I was fascinated by stories about Disney princesses and their quests to find true love. However, as I grew up, I began to see these films in a different way. I learned to analyze the films for their deeper meanings, which led me to become disheartened with the portrayal of females in many of the Disney films. Through my analysis, I noticed that female characters in many of the older Disney films depicted females as weak; they were fully dependent on finding a male counterpart in order to feel fulfilled and happy. I thought to myself, “Isn’t there more to being a woman than that?”

One of the films I loved as a child was *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. I have viewed *Snow White* again as an adult, and I found myself frustrated with the representation of Snow White. For example, Snow White’s only female relationship, which was with the Evil Queen, was rooted in jealousy and hate. Additionally, Snow White was so focused on becoming a perfect wife that she was willing to elope with a man she did not even know! Further, in Snow White’s relationship with the dwarfs, she is represented both as a mother figure and a sexual object. Throughout this 1937 film, Snow White’s character was heavily reliant upon the male characters in the film the Prince and the seven dwarfs. Snow White depended on males for her happiness and self-worth. Snow White’s character had no agency because she was limited by those around her, forced to use her beauty and domestic skills to be able to get what she wants. I felt as though Snow White represented a female stereotype of the 1930s. My frustrations with how Snow White was depicted remained until a TV show named *Once Upon a Time* aired on ABC in 2011.

Once Upon a Time (2011-2018) aired on Disney’s ABC and brought new attention to Snow White’s character. To give some context, the TV show is centered around the lives of

fairy tale characters, with most of the characters coming from *Disney* films. Throughout the first season, audience members are challenged to change their beliefs on well-known fairy tale figures such as Snow White, the Evil Queen, Beauty and the Beast, Cinderella, and so forth. The characters in this TV show act in ways that are different from how characters have acted in *Disney* films and fairy tales, encouraging audience members to re-evaluate their preconceived notions of who these characters are and what they represent. This thesis focuses on the first season of the show, where the fairy tale characters become cursed by the Evil Queen. Because of the curse, characters like Belle, Rumpelstiltskin, Snow White, and Red Riding Hood become trapped in a city called Storybrooke and cannot remember their pasts. The characters' lives are completely upturned, and many are unhappy in their cursed lives. Since the characters can't remember their old lives, they don't know who they really are or who they used to have relationships with. Everything is going the Evil Queen's way until her adoptive son, Henry, finds his birth mother, Emma Swan, and brings her to Storybrooke. His birth mother is Snow White and Prince Charming's daughter. Emma is around the same age as her mother and father because the fairy tale characters don't age during this curse. Henry spends most of the first season convincing the other characters that they are fairy tale characters, and they need to stand up to the Evil Queen to break the curse. Throughout the season, flashback scenes are utilized to show how the characters acted before they were cursed in the fairy tale land.

When I watched this TV show, I was instantly attracted to how the female characters were shown in powerful positions. All the frustration I felt when watching the animated Snow White movie was alleviated in this TV show version. Snow White was no longer shown as a weak, dependent character. The way Snow White was represented in *OUAT* was a stronger portrayal of a female character because Snow White was given agency and purpose. She was not

reliant upon a man to give her the happiness she needed, and she actively made decisions to better her life in ways that she did not do in the animated film. In other words, Snow White did not just wait around for her prince to come and rescue her; she made her life happen through her deliberate actions.

I believe that this TV show is an example of a revised fairy tale as outlined by Jack Zipes in the introduction to his book *Fairy Tale as Myth, Myth as Fairy Tale*.¹ When speaking about revised fairy tales, Zipes makes the distinction between duplication and revision. A duplicated fairy tale “recalls patterns and repeats them in a familiar way . . . It enables us to fall back on the comfortable familiar object that does not challenge our customary routines or habits” (8). By duplicating a fairy tale, according to Zipes, the set of patterns and ideas from the original are included in the re-telling (9). According to this statement, a duplicated fairy tale may be updated, but the core values are still the same. It does not challenge the structure of our everyday lives or beliefs; instead, it upholds them. On the other hand, Zipes states that a revised fairy tale’s purpose “is to create something new that incorporates the critical and creative thinking of the producer and corresponds to changed demands and tastes of audiences. As a result of transformed values, the revised classical fairy tale seeks to alter the reader’s views of traditional patterns, images, and codes” (9). To me, this means that a fairy tale must be changed to fit within a modern society. Because fairy tales were written to express familiar ideas and shared values, these often change as time progresses. In order to remain relevant, fairy tales need to be revised to fit within the society for which they are written. In the case of *Snow White*

¹ While Zipes looks at earlier versions of fairytales, including some written down during the 18th and 19th centuries, for the purposes of this study I am only comparing the Disney adaptations of this fairy tale. The "Snow White" story variant has a vast transmission history as covered by numerous folklore studies scholars, but that is not the focus of my thesis study which seeks to compare how the Disney company has "revised" its own back-catalog via *Once Upon a Time*.

and the Seven Dwarfs, to be a “revised” version of the original story, *Once Upon a Time* must challenge the core values, patterns, beliefs, and customs depicted in the original movie.

I consider *Once Upon a Time* a revision of the *Disney* version of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* because the plot has been updated to challenge the cultural norms present in the film. Since *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* is considered outdated in terms of cultural relevance to modern society, this retelling offers a chance to revise the character of Snow White to fit within a modern context. Zipes further argues that a revision of a fairy tale means that “there is something wrong with an original work and that it needs to be changed for the better” (10). *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* acts as the “original work” for Zipes definition in the comparison between *Snow White* and *Once Upon a Time*. I believe that *Once Upon a Time* revises the ideas present in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which demonstrates that there is “something wrong” with the Disney version which needs to be updated for modern society. In this case, the portrayal of Snow White is very outdated and *Once Upon a Time* represents a new version of Snow White that better fits in with modern society. Snow White is a major character in *Once Upon a Time*, and her updated storyline changes the perpetuation of non-feminist ideals for females. One of the major issues in *Snow White* that is revised in the TV show is the depiction of women as solely domestic, falling within stereotypical gender roles, and powerless and dependent upon males. *Once Upon a Time* is an example of a revised fairy tale because it reforms the anti-feminist message of the original fairy tale.

For the purpose of this thesis, I analyze the extent to which Snow White’s character in the film and show is shown as having agency. In the Disney film, I argue that Snow White has limited agency, and she depends on others to gain what she desires. In the TV show, I believe that Snow White has been revised to demonstrate her agency through purposeful actions

independent of those around her. Within my analysis for agency, I believe that it is important to look at how Snow White demonstrates her agency by analyzing her relationships with other characters. Specifically, I analyze Snow White's character in *Once Upon a Time* in comparison to *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* regarding how the character is depicted as having power within relationships to others and her connection to the stereotype of the female gender role. The results of key scene analyses of Snow White determine whether the TV show represents Snow White in a feminist way.

Michel Foucault is an important theorist to consider when analyzing female agency. In *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1* Part 4, Chapter 2 "Methods," Foucault outlines that power doesn't just occur; it happens in small instances. What this means is that a female in a patriarchal society has the opportunity to show power through small actions. This section is particularly helpful for my argument because Foucault's argument about power and resistance to power offers a place for Snow White's character to gain agency through resistance in *Once Upon a Time*. Foucault outlines that there are ways to find resistance to repressive power within systems that are oppressive. Foucault speaks about agency as power and ways of resistance within systems. Foucault states that "power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault 93). In other words, people can find access to power everywhere. It does not matter their gender or social status; people can find power within their social structures. A female, under the right circumstances, can have power over a man because power can be found everywhere. Foucault further elaborates on this idea by claiming that "power comes from below" (Foucault 94). Power is not always afforded only to those considered on top. People on the bottom of social structures can gain power through various means as well. Particularly useful for my argument is Foucault's claim that "where there is

power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault 95). I feel that this is the most useful idea from Foucault on power. What Foucault means here is that anytime you have people in power, there is always a space for those without power to resist. Here is where my argument with Snow White's character depiction lies. In the original film, Snow White does not challenge or resist those in power, she merely plays into their power system. The closest she gets to resisting power is through manipulating people, not on purpose, with her beauty to get what she desires, male attention and safety. In *Once Upon a Time*, Snow White's character does demonstrate this resistance to power as she stands against stereotypes and challenges the power that males and the Queen hold over her.

This means that Snow White can be given agency within the systems present in society, her character just needs to find the places where she can demonstrate her power. In the Disney film, Snow White was only able to demonstrate her power through her domestic duties and beauty. Snow White was written as having no agency because she never has power. The oppressive male dominated systems of power did not allow Snow White to be depicted in a way where she could make her own decisions and act in her best interest. Instead, she was depicted in ways that upheld the current patriarchal ideals of power, and left Snow White with no way to be shown as asserting herself independently of male characters. However, *Once Upon a Time* writes Snow White in a way where she is able to demonstrate power based upon her own desires and well-being. Snow White is depicted as a much more dynamic character where she is given the opportunity to have moments of agency. In fact, her curse is that she has no way to demonstrate her power, and it isn't until she deviates from this powerless state that she begins to

remember who she is and become happy. By writing Snow White in this way, *Once Upon a Time* finds where Snow White can resist the current systems in place and act with power.

One way I feel that a feminist text challenges traditional gender roles is by offering female characters the ability to act outside of traditional patriarchal gender expectations. Snow White in *Once Upon a Time* is written as being more fluid between the stereotypes for gender roles, demonstrating that females have a choice to enact, or deviate from, traditional gender roles. Simone de Beauvoir's ideas presented in her work *The Second Sex* are particularly useful when looking at female gender roles. De Beauvoir believes that a female is brought up to abide by certain values and expectations and is held accountable to these expectations through cultural standards. Women in society are constantly reminded of the role women in society fill, which for de Beauvoir, is to be a supportive role to men. Women, in this way, are defined as the Other in relation to men (1263). In this piece, de Beauvoir argues that society has constructed a myth of women, outlining the female gender role as less than men, mysterious, sexual, maternal, and dependent. This is useful for my analysis of Snow White as I am looking at how her character upholds, or challenges, this "myth of the woman." Snow White's character challenges traditional gender role expectations when she is represented as not adhering to gender roles placed upon females. Specifically, some traits that I have found oftentimes associated with being female in pop culture are being passive, dependent, domestic, motherly, sexually attractive, weak, coy, and apologetic. A female character who attempts to reject the patriarchal gender expectations might, for example, demonstrate traits that may be considered stereotypically male such as being dominant, independent, active, powerful, physically strong, and outspoken. When a female character is associated with traits that would be considered stereotypically male, I believe that this is showing a rejection of the patriarchal gender expectations and attempting to

change these stereotypes. A female does not have to act in a way that is set for them by society. They can have traits that are associated with female gender, traits that are associated with the male gender, or a mix of both. In this way, females are able to demonstrate their freedom in being whoever they choose to be. In this freedom, females show power and agency. In *Once Upon a Time*, the character Snow White demonstrates this choice in associating with male and female traits and having access to this choice is feminist. She demonstrates the option to conform to either male or female standards. She doesn't simply act male or female, she demonstrates a wider variety of options available for females in today's society. Snow White does not have to follow either a male or a female stereotype, she can be both, and this is what makes *Once Upon a Time*'s depiction feminist.

Another piece that is particularly helpful when looking at gender roles for females is Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf argues that women do not have the same opportunities as men due to inequality in opportunities. She explains this through her example of Shakespeare's fictional sister, who had all the same genius of Shakespeare, but none of the opportunities afforded to men to capitalize on this genius. To connect these ideas to my analysis, I feel that Snow White's character does not challenge traditional patriarchal gender expectations in the 1937 film because she upholds the idea of the female myth spoken about by de Beauvoir and is not afforded the same opportunities as male characters which demonstrates the same issues of gender equality explained by Woolf. In other words, Snow White in the 1937 movie falls into the gender stereotypes presented for females. However, Snow White in the TV show *Once Upon a Time* is a feminist character because she is shown as reversing the idea of the female myth by demonstrating traits that would not be considered traditionally feminine, and thus allowing herself to be awarded the same opportunities male characters have.

Monique Wittig in her piece “One is Not Born a Woman” references de Beauvoir’s myth of the woman as she argues that the separation of man and woman is political. Wittig believes that women need to kill the myth of what it is to be a woman, echoing earlier ideas about the myth of the woman from Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf. Wittig states, “A lesbian society reveals that the division from men of which women have been the object is a political one and shows that we have been ideologically rebuilt into a ‘natural group’” (1637). Wittig is showing here that the gender role expectations for males and females are created. This idea is helpful for my argument because it shows how these role expectations are created by society, and thus they change as society changes. Wittig also states, “We have been compelled in our bodies and in our minds to correspond, feature by feature, with the *idea* of nature that has been established for us” (1637). Snow White in the Disney film is a character that was compelled to correspond with the gender role expectations of the 1930s in America. She fit this gender role in her thoughts, actions, and her looks. This locks Snow White into a traditional representation that upholds patriarchal ideas. Furthermore, Wittig claims, “Matriarchy is no less heterosexual than patriarchy: it is only the sex of the oppressor that changes” (1638). Wittig argues that women are viewed in relation to men with women being viewed as less than men, however this can’t be solved just by flipping the situation. If women became the oppressors, the problem of gender inequality would still exist. This supports my thesis argument because I believe that a feminist portrayal is one that shows females as equal to males, not better than them. For women to be portrayed in a feminist way, they must demonstrate agency and equality in their relationships.

Another way Snow White’s character in *Once Upon a Time* shows agency is through her relationships with female characters. In the Disney film, Snow White’s only female relationship is based upon jealousy over beauty and male desire. Snow White is unable to gain agency in the

film partly because of her tarnished female relationship with the Queen that is based on male desire. This idea is supported by the Bechdel test from Alison Bechdel's comic strip "The Rule," which appeared in the 1985 printing of the comic *Dykes to Watch Out For* (1983-2008). In this comic strip, the characters are discussing three rules that a film must satisfy in order for the characters to see it. These three rules became popularized as the Bechdel test which helps to show whether a film is representing a female character in a feminist way. These three simple rules state, "One it has to have at least two women in it who, two, talk to each other about, three, something besides a man" (Bechdel). While this test does not definitively tell how much a text is/is not feminist, it can help us analyze whether the character can potentially be feminist. I agree with Bechdel's idea that in order to be considered a feminist text, female characters need to have conversations with other female characters about something other than love or romantic interests. When applying the Bechdel test to the TV show, I found that *Once Upon a Time* does pass the test, but the animated film does not. Since the Bechdel test is a simplified predictor of the potential of a text to be seen as feminist, it is one indication that *Once Upon a Time* can be read as a feminist text. Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* is again helpful here when analyzing the section "Chloe liked Olivia." In this section, Woolf outlines how she was struck by the line "Chloe liked Olivia" when reading *Life's Adventures* written by Mary Carmichael because "Chloe liked Olivia perhaps for the first time in literature" (899). Woolf elaborates that the reason why this line struck her so much is because female relationships in texts usually represent a jealous or envious relationship, not a friendly one, such as the relationship between Cleopatra and Octavia in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (899). Women are almost always "shown in their relation to men" (899). This is a major issue because Snow White in the film and Mary Margaret in the TV show struggle to maintain positive female relationships. Both

Snow White and Mary Margaret (the cursed version of Snow White) struggle to create meaningful female relationships outside of their relationships with males. In order for a text to be considered feminist, women need to have positive relationships with other women. It is okay for a female character to like another female character. It is healthy for female characters to have conversations about things other than men. A feminist text offers female relationships that are real and based upon more than jealousy, envy, or desire for male attention.

Furthermore, I will analyze the depiction of Snow White's agency through her relationship with male characters. While I will be focusing mostly on the romantic relationship between Snow White and Prince Charming, I feel that this can also be applied to platonic relationships such as the relationship between Snow White and the dwarfs. In order to be considered a feminist text, I believe that males and females need to show equality in relationships and the power must be shared. The male and the female should have conversations where both genders are able to express themselves and be heard proportionately. Also, the relationship must be something that is positively influencing the lives of both sexes involved, not just the male. The relationships between males and females cannot be focused just on sexual attraction, but a relationship needs to develop based on personality and experiences together. In the TV show, Snow White develops her relationship with Prince Charming based upon experiences they share together, not just based on sexual attraction like in the animated film. I argue that *Once Upon a Time* does represent strong female to male relationships which demonstrates that the character of Snow White can be viewed as feminist.

In this project, my methodology will be a comparative analysis, with a focus on the narrative and dialogue in the representation of Snow White in the 1937 animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* versus the representation of Snow White (or Mary Margaret as she

is referred to as in the cursed world) in the television show *Once Upon a Time*. Because of the impact of the 1937 film on *Once Upon a Time*, we must consider it as context when we look at *Once Upon a Time*. We need to understand Snow White's role in the animated film in order to understand the changes and the impact of these changes in the TV show. There has already been much written about Snow White's character in the animated film, I want to build upon this scholarship in looking at how Snow White's character has changed in the TV show.

When looking at *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* along with *Once Upon a Time*, I can see that Snow White's character changed from an anti-feminist damsel in distress to a feminist hero. Snow White in the 1937 film is passive and dependent upon finding a male for success. The overall message that the animated movie projects about women is that they have no power independently of men and their happiness is dependent upon others. Through this representation, the film shows that female characters are secondary to male characters and cannot attain their own happiness. Conversely, in the 2011 TV show *Once Upon a Time*, Snow White's actions show an active female character who is able to make decisions and be happy independent of a male character. By changing Snow White in this way, *Once Upon a Time* projects the message that females can create their own happiness and are able to take an active role in their own life decisions.

I have set up two chapters to analyze the representation of Snow White in the TV show alongside the animated film. The first chapter will look at how *Once Upon a Time* offers a revised version of Disney's Snow White. This chapter includes a comparative analysis between similar scenes in *Snow White* and *Once Upon a Time*. The argument throughout Chapter 1 is that *Once Upon a Time* represents a Snow White that challenges traditional gender roles and allows Snow White to demonstrate the agency she never had in the animated film. In the second

chapter, I argue that Snow White/Mary Margaret is cursed in *Once Upon a Time* to live a life stuck in the stereotypes of the female gender role, like that of Disney's Snow White. As Mary Margaret discovers her true self, she resists these stereotypes and demonstrates how agency can be gained in a patriarchal society. Through Mary Margaret's relationships with others, specifically Emma, she is able to regain her agency and thus her memories. Each chapter will analyze scenes from the animated film and the TV show to demonstrate how the character upholds or challenges the patriarchal representation of Snow White in the animated film. Ultimately the change in the representation of the female character Snow White in *Once Upon a Time* results in a feminist figure because she rejects the gender roles previously pushed upon women and instead projects a new woman: one that is free to act in her self-interest regardless of abiding by gender role guidelines.

Chapter 1: Snow White as a Feminist Character

As I was watching the first season of *Once Upon a Time*, I became intrigued by the change in representation of popular fairy tale characters. While the show alludes to the past popularized fairy tales, the writers make specific changes to the storylines of these characters to offer a new take on their identities and their stories. One such character that is the focus of this chapter is Snow White, aka Mary Margaret in the cursed town of Storybrooke. I noticed that her character pushed back on the notion that Snow White should act in a frail and dependent manner. Instead of being saved by men, she can save herself. This intrigued me and caused me to look deeper into her representation of female agency in a modern fairy tale.

While watching *Once Upon a Time*, I noticed that there was a difference between the character of Mary Margaret when she is cursed and Snow White before the curse. *Once Upon a Time* takes the outdated representation of Snow White and revises the story by offering a feminist revision of the character Snow White. In *Once Upon a Time*, Snow White is split into two different characters, Snow White and Mary Margaret. The Snow White character more directly correlates to the Disney version because it is the same character with the same back story. However, *OUAT* depicts Snow White with agency through her actions and relationships. *Once Upon a Time* gives Snow White a background, which creates a more dynamic character. The weak female representation in the Disney film is challenged throughout the show as Snow White is depicted as a more active and dominant character. This is a feminist representation because Snow White has agency in *Once Upon a Time*, where she was lacking it in the film. To analyze Snow White's character, I look at her depiction of female agency. Specifically, I will look at the power Snow White's character demonstrates through her relationships to gender stereotypes, male characters, and female characters. I analyze how Snow White's character

represents power in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* and compare/contrast this representation to Snow White in *Once Upon a Time*.

When researching *Once Upon a Time*, much of the scholarship that relates to female character development is an analysis of race or sexuality. Rukmin Pande and Swati Moitra's article, "Yes, the Evil Queen Is Latina!: Racial Dynamics of Online Femslash Fandoms," focuses on the portrayal of female characters and the reactions from fandoms. The Evil Queen is analyzed as a Latina figure. The authors argue that there is a lack of diverse characters and an absence of focusing on race in the TV show. In this quote, the authors describe the problems they see in the show regarding depicting people of color and queer characters:

In the course of its five seasons, Once Upon a Time has accrued numerous charges of racefail and queerfail from its viewers. The show's main cast continues to feature only one POC, Lana Parrilla, who is of Puerto Rican/Italian heritage and identifies as a Latina. Until the fifth (current) season of the show, there were no explicitly queer characters, despite its heavily subtextual teasing of Mulan's bisexuality—first, with her gender ambiguous expression of love for Princess Aurora, and later, with the characters Ruby and Merida in the fifth season of the show.

Here, the authors suggest that the TV show doesn't have enough characters who are people of color and when they do have them, like with the Queen, the story lines do not deal with their race. The queer relationship between Emma and Regina (referred to as Swan Queen) is also described as problematic as they represent the two moms that their son Henry has. While Emma, the white character is described as the good mom, Regina, the Latina character, is shown as the bad mom. This, according to the authors, further problematizes the show's demonstration of lesbian people and people of color. Furthermore, there has also been scholarship on analysis of

queer characters like Little Red Riding Hood in the piece “I Am the Wolf: Queering ‘Little Red Riding Hood’ and ‘Snow White and Rose Red’ in the Television Show Once Upon a Time” by Brittany Warman. Warman looks at two definitions for queer, one meaning a sex relationship and the other meaning a person who is strange or does not fit in with societal norms. Throughout this article, Ruby’s character is looked at in relation to queerness. She is depicted as the wolf, as wolves are a queer character that represents a half animal half human. By doing so, Ruby is taking on the queer form herself. For my paper, I am not focusing on a queer reading or an analysis of race, as this has already been discussed by previous scholars. They leave a place for my work because they are not analyzing gender representation in the TV show, which allows me to focus on issues of gender pertaining to the TV show’s characters.

In terms of Snow White’s character, I am not the first to claim that she represents a motherly figure and upholds traditional patriarchal gender roles. Jack Zipes in his chapter “Breaking the Disney Spell” from *Fairy Tale as Myth, Myth as Fairy Tale* describes the 1937 film as following “the classic ‘sexist’ narrative about the framing of women’s lives through a male discourse” (89). When I read this quote, this helped me understand that Snow White’s character was not created to push against the boundaries of gender roles, but instead to uphold them. Zipes further argues that Walt Disney shows Snow White in a similar sexist way as the original Grimms’ fairy tale. According to Zipes, Snow White signifies the traditional female role and does not challenge the ideas presented in the original fairy tale, but rather maintains them in this animated film.

Betsy Cohen analyzes Snow White’s connection to female stereotypes and her relationships in her book *The Snow White Syndrome: All About Envy*. Cohen argues that “Walt Disney’s *Snow White*, from 1936, presents a cultural ideal and stereotype of the passive

housewife who comes to life only with the prince's kiss" (1). While Cohen mainly focuses on the feeling of envy projected from the Evil Queen because of Snow White, she further elaborates on the idea that Snow White is a stereotype of a female because Snow White needed to be with the Prince in order to even out her feminine qualities with his masculine qualities (13). Cohen argues that the film represents Snow White as needing to be with the prince in order to be complete. Also, Dawn England, Lara Descartes, and Melissa Collier-Meek in their article "Gender Role Portrayal and the Disney Princesses" looks at a series of Disney princess movies that includes *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. In this article, the authors argue that female characters have changed throughout Disney films to represent changing gender roles while male characters have remained stagnant. These authors analyze how Snow White characterizes a female who is powerless. These scholars clarify how Snow White's character is often analyzed as anti-feminist because she represents a stereotype of a female.

One of the first gender stereotypes Snow White supports in the *Disney* film is that a female's worth is based upon her beauty. This is represented through the relationship Snow White has with the Queen. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Snow White has almost no female relationships. The one relationship that Snow White does have in the film is with her stepmother, the Queen. The audience is exposed to this relationship through the conversations the Queen has with her magic mirror, depicting the relationship as one based on jealousy and envy. The Queen is content with her life until the magic mirror tells her that Snow White is "more fair than thee" (Disney 3:15). Instantly, the Queen is jealous and envious of Snow White's beauty. Through this immediate reaction, the Queen illustrates the stereotype that a female's worth is based upon her beauty. The Queen feels that she cannot exist with Snow White being more beautiful than her. As long as Snow White is alive, males will always desire her more. This perpetuates the idea that a female needs to capture the attention of a male to

matter, as well as the idea that females are in competition with one another. This jealous relationship between the Queen and Snow White is an example of Virginia Woolf's argument in *A Room of One's Own*, where Woolf explains how most female relationships in texts are based on jealousy. Snow White is not given the opportunity to be friends with the Queen, as their relationship is only ever based upon jealousy and competition. I find it strange that Snow White does not try to speak to the Queen or befriend her in any way. In fact, they never interact with one another in the beginning of the film. The opening scene states, "Once upon a time there lived a lovely Princess named Snow White. Her vain and wicked stepmother the Queen feared that someday Snow White's beauty would surpass her own. So she dressed the little princess in rags and forced her to work as a scullery maid" (Disney 1:46). From these lines, we can see that Snow White and the Queen never had a close relationship. The Queen viewed Snow White as competition for male desire from the beginning, and they were never able to form a loving relationship. I feel that Snow White and the Queen are never meant to be friends. They could not develop a friendship, or a relationship based upon their personalities and shared experiences. These two female characters are shown in an immediate conflict, with no hope of ever having a functioning friendship. Overall, this flawed and jealous relationship demonstrates the idea that females should compete against one another for male desire.

Once it is established that the Queen and Snow White cannot co-exist together, the Queen enlists the help of a huntsman to murder Snow White so the Queen can become the fairest of them all. When the huntsman fails to kill Snow White, the Queen is again filled with rage. Snow White flees into the woods, with no intention of ever returning to the castle. With Snow White gone, one would think that the Queen would be able to return to her life and be happy. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The Queen cannot be happy until she is able to destroy the object of her jealous rage. This jealous relationship is so powerful that neither female can move

past it. Snow White spends her time throughout the middle of the film attempting to build a new life with the dwarfs, away from the evil of the Queen. While Snow White builds her life in the woods, she is still unable to escape the fear she has about being found. Her daily life is affected by the fear that she will be found and killed by the Queen or her servants.

Later on in the film, Snow White encounters the Queen one more time, but this time the Queen is disguised as an old woman. Snow White initially shows fear towards this woman, but her fear begins to subside when the old woman begins a conversation and offers Snow White an apple (Disney 1:10:40). Her fear disappears when Snow White feels that she can trust an old woman. However, this allows for the Queen to take advantage of Snow White's kindness. When the animals try to attack this disguised version of the Queen, Snow White steps in to help her because she is elderly. Snow White exclaims to the animals, "Shame on you. Frightening a poor old lady" (Disney 1:10:58). Snow White turns into a stereotype of a caregiver figure towards the Queen. The conversation between the two quickly changes to speaking about Snow White's love life, with the Queen offering her one wish. Snow White's wish is that she will marry the Prince and live happily ever after in his castle. If we apply Alison Bechdel's test presented in her comic strip "The Rule," this scene fails. The two are together, yet the conversation is structured around Snow White's desire for a man. This immediately leads Snow White to her downfall because she makes this wish, bites the apple, and falls down unconscious. The only relationship presented between two females in this film is extremely problematic for female representation. Snow White is shown as not being able to have a positive relationship with another female. This relationship based on jealousy and fear leads to the attempt at murder on Snow White.

In contrast, *Once Upon a Time* offers a more detailed explanation of the relationship between Snow White and the Queen. The *Disney* version focuses on the jealousy the Queen has

towards Snow White based upon her beauty. There is not a lot of time spent describing the relationship that they have with each other; rather, the film only shows the hate and envy the Queen feels instantly towards Snow White. However, the TV show does dissect the relationship and offer reasoning behind the actions of the Queen. In *Once Upon a Time*, the relationship between Snow White and the Queen isn't based upon jealousy over beauty. This superficial idea of the Queen wanting Snow White dead because she wants to be the fairest of them all is revised in the TV show which offers a more feminist retelling because these female characters are not competing for male desire or to be the most beautiful. The characters of Snow White and the Queen are given a chance to build their relationship based upon their actions and personalities, not based upon competition. While the outcome is the same in the TV show, the Queen develops a deep hatred of Snow White, the characters are given an opportunity to build upon their relationship and it is much more complex than the superficial relationship explored in the Disney film.

Instead of being focused on the looks of Snow White, the Queen in *Once Upon a Time* develops hatred towards Snow White is based on an act of betrayal. Snow White and the Queen develop a relationship in *Once Upon a Time*, which is what we see missing in the Disney film. The Queen is riding a horse when she hears the screams of a child and sees Snow White dashing past on an uncontrolled horse. The Queen (who isn't the Queen yet) chases after Snow White and rescues her. They exchange pleasantries and Snow White heads back to her home. Later, the Queen is visited by Snow White's father, who asks for her hand in marriage. This is problematic because the Queen is in love with someone else, a man her mother does not approve of. Snow White and the Queen develop a close bond as the marriage approaches. The Queen and Snow White are shown as being pleasant and happy for one another, which is vastly different from the Disney version. Through this retelling, the audience understands that Snow

White and the Queen can have a close relationship. These two are not in competition. In fact, the Queen desperately wants to leave the castle and run away with the man she truly loves. She confides in Snow White that she wants to run away. This demonstrates a trust and love between these two characters that is not seen in the Disney film. Snow White supports the Queen in her quest for true love and vows to protect her secret. This is a feminist revision because we see these two characters love and support one another instead of hating and destroying each other. They are capable of developing a relationship that is positive and supportive.

As the show progresses, the audience learns that Snow White breaks a promise to her soon-to-be stepmother. Young Snow White is tricked by the Queen's mother into telling the Queen's secret romance. The once ideal relationship between Snow White and the Queen is tarnished when the Queen's lover is murdered. Snow White's action of telling the secret is the reason why the Queen has such hatred towards her. In this version, the audience empathizes with the Queen, understanding her rage towards Snow White because of the broken promise. Snow White is also able to understand that she caused this reaction from the Queen because of her actions. Snow White's choice has consequences, which ultimately leads to the Queen hating her. I believe that the development of the Queen and Snow White's relationship is a feminist portrayal because of a few reasons. First, the hatred the Queen has is not based upon jealousy about Snow White's looks. She is not in competition with Snow White for sexual desire. Instead, she is angry with her because the action of telling about the secret romance caused her lover to be murdered. That leads me to the other reason why this is a feminist portrayal. In *Once Upon a Time*, Snow White is responsible for the Queen's rage. She knowingly tells the Queen's secret and comprehends that she is at fault for the death of the Queen's lover. While she feels awful about this, she understands that her actions have consequences. In the *Disney* version, Snow White is helpless and confused as to why the Queen is wanting her dead. She does not do

anything to warrant this treatment and hides in fear. While the Queen and Snow White do not have a friendship in both versions, Snow White in the TV show is aware of why she is in the situation and she knows that it was her actions that caused this hatred.

Snow White's character also demonstrates more agency in the poison apple scene in *Once Upon a Time*. The Disney version of Snow White being poisoned shows how weak and naive she is. Instead, *Once Upon a Time* illustrates that Snow White is a character that has female agency, even in this key scene. Instead of being tricked, like Disney's Snow White was, the TV show's Snow White fully understands what will happen when she bites the apple in Episode 21. In this scene, Snow White learns that the Queen has stolen her Prince Charming and is planning on killing him (1.21 32:00). The Queen tells Snow White that she can save him if she bites into the apple that will kill her. Snow White makes the choice to bite into the apple, understanding that she will die to save Prince Charming's life. Snow White is given agency that she didn't have before because she is not tricked. She knows that she is speaking with the Queen, and she knows that she will die when she bites the apple. The choice she makes is her decision with all the facts known. This is a feminist revision because Snow White can weigh her options and decide on her own. She is not manipulated or forced into the decision. She can choose to die or choose to let Prince Charming die. She chooses for herself to die. When the Prince rescues her with true love's kiss later in the episode, it is less dominating and creepy because the audience is aware that they had a relationship before her being unconscious. Instead, the audience sees that Snow White "died" to save Prince Charming, so he reciprocates the action by saving her life. He is not some unknown man kissing Snow White without her permission. Instead, he is someone she has developed a romantic relationship with and someone who is paying her back for saving his life.

Another way Snow White connects to female gender stereotypes is through the effect her beauty has on men. She represents female beauty and how it is captivating to those around her, but her beauty also locks her into the domestic/feminine role. The film has many still shots of Snow White's beauty, leading the audience to focus on it. When the Queen asks the magic mirror who the fairest in the land is, the mirror poetically describes Snow White when he states, "Lips red as the rose. Hair black as ebony. Skin white as snow" (Disney 3:35). This description helps to set Snow White as a standard of beauty with her red lips, dark hair, and light skin. Also, the film references her beauty multiple times focusing on her physical looks, her happiness, and her high-pitched singing voice. This beauty depicted throughout the film is a trait that gives many benefits to Snow White.

As previously mentioned, the audience learns of the Queen's jealousy over Snow White due to her beauty and hires a huntsman to kill her. The Queen orders the huntsman to kill Snow White, but he is unable to do so (Disney 8:56). Although the huntsman knows his life is in danger by refusing to do what the Queen has commanded of him, he simply cannot harm Snow White because she is too beautiful. She is the "fairest one of all," making it impossible for the huntsman to murder such a fair creature (Disney 3:16). Snow White is completely distracted by a bird while the huntsman sneaks up to kill her (Disney 8:35). As Snow White hears him approach, she turns and screams, causing the huntsman to drop his knife and beg for her forgiveness (Disney 8:57). It is only when she turns and he is faced with her beauty that he chooses to drop the knife and let her flee. He chooses to let her go, not because of anything Snow White does or says, but because she is too beautiful to kill. In this moment, the audience sees that the huntsman is the one in control of their relationship. He can choose to kill her, let her go, or befriend her. Snow White is helpless in this relationship and must wait for the

huntsman's decision. However, even though her beauty saves her life, it is a passive action that Snow White seems unaware of throughout the film.

This scene is problematic because Snow White demonstrates that she is at the complete mercy of the huntsman, dependent upon him to decide whether she lives or not. While her beauty does save her life, this is not a feminist representation because she falls into many female stereotypes. Snow White is shown as being valued only for her beauty. She is also shown as being dependent upon the huntsman for survival. This passivity and dependency are a traditional female trait expressed through Snow White's character. The huntsman tells Snow White to run away when he finds he cannot bring himself to murder her. This is not a decision of her own, it is something that she obeys when told. As she is running away, she shows fear towards everything in the forest; the trees, the water, the animals, the wind, the leaves . . . Eventually Snow White is consumed by her fear and collapses in tears. She lays in the middle of the forest crying, unable to figure out what to do next (Disney 10:50). She does nothing but cry for a few seconds, as the animals in the forest slowly approach her, which startles her (Disney 11:30). This demonstrates how Snow White is helpless and dependent on others for survival. She is told to run by the huntsman, so she does. However, without anyone in the forest to guide her, she collapses in fear and seems to give up. It is only when the animals rescue her is she able to follow them to the dwarfs' cottage for safety. Snow White is portrayed as a very one-dimensional character. She is beautiful and passive, unable to protect herself or make her own choices.

While *Snow White* offers a non-feminist view on Snow White's relationship to the Huntsman, *Once Upon a Time* shows a feminist revision in this view. In Episode 7, the Huntsman scene shows that Snow White's character demonstrates agency. In contrast to the passive and dependent Snow White analyzed previously, *Once Upon a Time*'s Snow White is

active and independent. This feminist version of Snow White can live because she outsmarts the Huntsman who has been hired to kill her. In the Disney film, Snow White is oblivious to the Huntsman's desire to kill her. However, in *OUAT*, Snow White is fully aware of the Queen's hatred towards her and understands that the Huntsman has been sent out to kill her. In Episode 7, the Huntsman is walking with Snow White in the woods, pretending to be her escort (1.7 20:18). While they are walking, Snow White has a conversation with him. She offers him an apple when she thinks he might be hungry and then states, "You're not a knight are you? Without fail, every single one of my father's knights has offered me condolences, except you. And they all know how to wear armor" (1.7 21:07). This shows that Snow White is perceptive and intelligent. She knows that he was hired to kill her, and instead of passively waiting for it to happen, like in the Disney film, she faces the situation head on. After asking the Huntsman this question, she hits him with a large stick to run away. This active decision allows Snow White to stand up for herself and choose to save herself. This is a very different portrayal of Snow White. This Snow White is quite aware of what is happening around her, she is intelligent, and she is purposeful in her actions. She understands that she needs to protect herself and makes choices to get herself out of this dangerous situation.

Eventually, the Huntsman catches up to Snow White, but she continues to make decisions that save her life. As the Huntsman approaches, Snow White admits defeat and gives him a letter for the Queen (1.7 21:08). Snow White seems genuine in her resolve to stop running and let the Huntsman kill her. The mistake she made in disclosing the Queen's plan to escape with her lover weighs heavy on Snow White's heart. In this moment, the audience sees that Snow White is empathetic and understanding. This portrayal is different from the Disney film because Snow White is not shown as having these complex feelings in the *Disney* version. *OUAT*'s Snow White depicts a character who is dynamic in her emotions and is able to connect with

those around her. When the Huntsman reads the letter Snow White has written for the Queen, he is greatly affected by her words. The deep level of understanding she has for the Queen's emotions, as well as her willingness to sacrifice herself so the Queen can be happy, leave the Huntsman in shock. Instead of her worth being decided by her beauty, he chooses to let Snow White live because of the wonderful person he sees she is. She is valued not for her sexual attractiveness, but for her kindness and ability to forgive. The Huntsman lets Snow White go because of her personality and actions. This is a more feminist version than the Disney depiction because Snow White shows that her actions have value, not just her looks.

In the 1937 film, Snow White shows that females are valued by their ability to care for others. The gender stereotype perpetuated by the film is that females are to act motherly and be domestic. This is shown in *Snow White* because Snow White's sole purpose in the film is to find a man with whom to live happily ever after. Throughout the film, she is a caregiver towards the dwarfs, which emphasizes her ideal motherly instincts. Snow White's character in the *Disney* film upholds the stereotype that a female is a caretaker and should focus on their domestic skills. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, a scene often interpreted as demonstrating Snow White's connection to a stereotypical female gender role is when she first finds the cottage that belongs to the seven dwarfs. In this scene, Snow White rushes into a cottage to escape from the terrors of nature outside. Snow White assumes the cottage belongs to seven children who are very messy. Zipes argues that "in Disney's film, she arrives and notices that the house is dirty. So, she convinces the animals to help her make the cottage tidy so that the dwarfs will perhaps let her stay there" ("Breaking the Disney Spell" 89). I believe Zipes is correct in saying that Snow White fulfills the motherly, domestic role in dictating to the animals, which can be read as a representation of her children, on what they need to clean. When viewing the film, I noticed that Snow White happily exclaims 15 seconds into the cottage scene, "And I will use the broom!"

This exclamation shows her complete happiness in fulfilling the role of a domestic female.

Throughout the scene I saw further connection to what Zipes stated when the animals, and the motherly Snow White, are engaged in cleaning with joy as shown from their smiling and dancing while doing their work. In this way, I feel that cleaning is illustrated as fun and games. This shows the audience that females should dictate to their children their cleaning obligations, and females should find joy in their domestic duties. There was no adult male character in the scene, which shows that women oversee creating this domestic harmony. To me, this demonstrates that Snow White is valued by her ability to clean and keep a home. Zipes continues in his piece “Breaking the Disney Spell,” stating, “Of course, the house for the Grimms and Disney was the place where good girls remained, and one aspect of the fairy tale and the film is about the domestication of women” (89). In this scene, Zipes argues that Snow White represents how women are valued for staying in the home and taking care of their families while their husbands were at work. If I take this argument further, Snow White’s joy in caring for the home and the dwarfs demonstrates the traditional role females are pressured to fulfill as a mother and a good housekeeper. Snow White demonstrates that she upholds these traditional views because she willingly and happily cleans and cares for the child-like animals and dwarfs. She is shown as content with her duties, representing support of this traditional role for females.

The stereotype of being a caregiver is exemplified in the film by the relationship between Snow White and the seven dwarfs. Throughout the film, Snow White relates to the dwarfs as though they are children. When Snow White first encounters the dwarf cottage, she assumes the inhabitants are children (Disney 26:55). When the dwarfs come home, they instantly comment on how someone has cleaned the house and has dinner cooking (Disney 28:14). These actions help to portray Snow White in a motherly role as a caretaker of the “children” in the house. Her actions of cleaning and cooking represent the domestic duties Snow White ties herself to. If she

is going to be allowed to stay, then she must prove to the men that she is worthy of staying by cleaning and taking care of them. The dwarfs initially are hesitant to let Snow White stay with them, but when they realize she will cook for them, they are excited to keep her. They are looking to Snow White as their caregiver and mother figure.

This relationship between the dwarfs and Snow White can also be analyzed as a traditional marriage relationship. Snow White represents the domestic wife, and the seven dwarfs represent the working husband. The first time the dwarfs see Snow White they are stunned by her beauty. The dwarfs exclaim, “It’s a girl . . . She’s mighty perty . . . She’s beautiful, just like an angel” (Disney 35:10). Many of the dwarfs comment on Snow White’s beautiful looks and blush when she kisses them or says kind things to them. This demonstrates the sexual desire between the dwarfs and Snow White. Every day, Snow White takes care of the home while the dwarfs go out to work to be the providers of the house. At the end of the movie, the dwarfs all line up to get kissed by Snow White, and she must kiss each of them (some of them more than once in the case of Dopey) regardless of her wishes. When analyzing this relationship, I see that Snow White is placed in a traditional marriage with these dwarfs where she is meant to be domestic and care for her husband (the dwarfs in this case). If Snow White takes care of the home and provides sexual attention, the dwarfs will allow her to stay.

Like the relationship with the Huntsman, Snow White is the object of the dwarfs’ sexual desire. When she “dies,” they place her in a glass coffin, so they are still able to see her beauty even in death. The glass coffin is an important symbol to analyze. The glass coffin has been discussed by Carina Hart in her piece, “Glass Beauty: Coffins and Corpses in A.S. Byatt’s ‘Possession.’” Hart discusses the coffin as transformative and revealing. She analyzes how Byatt views the glass as a sign of beauty, with the audience being able to view the character through the glass without hiding the person. With these ideas in mind, I view the glass coffin as

a symbol of the delicacy of females which accentuates the importance of women's beauty. Snow White is delicate and breakable, just like the glass coffin. She is far too beautiful to be covered by the traditional coffin that would not allow the dwarfs, or other males, to look upon her beauty. The emphasis in this scene is the beauty of women depicted on screen by the words "so beautiful, even in death, that the dwarfs could not find it in their hearts to bury her." The dwarfs are so focused on her beauty that they cannot find it in themselves to bury her. This is strange because Snow White is supposedly dead. The dwarfs want to deny her a burial just so they can stare at her beauty. They are not ready to let their desired Snow White go, so they choose not to bury her.

The relationship between Snow White and the dwarfs is represented very differently in *OUAT*. When looking at the relationship between Snow White and the dwarfs in *OUAT*, Snow White shows agency, specifically with Grumpy. The relationship between Snow White and the dwarfs in the animated Disney film represents Snow White's dependency on male figures. Her relationship was one where she performed domestic duties, and they provided for her in return. In *OUAT*, this relationship is much more equal. This equality is what makes the representation of the relationship feminist. Snow White is no longer looked at as a motherly/sexual figure for the dwarfs. Instead, she is looked at as their equal and their friend. This is shown when Snow White first meets Grumpy in a jail cell at the Prince's castle in Episode 14. Grumpy and Snow White discuss love and heartbreak, allowing both to develop a liking for each other based on similar experiences. When Grumpy is rescued, this shared experience allows him to help Snow White escape. Snow White's actions of being kind and supportive of Grumpy causes him to want to help her escape. As they are leaving, Grumpy and his brother are caught by the guards, so Snow White chooses to help Grumpy survive. They develop a deep bond between each other based upon actions and experiences, rather than based upon sexual desire. This

demonstrates another relationship where Snow White has equality and value that is based upon her nature and actions versus just her domestic duties and beauty. This is feminist because Snow White develops a relationship with Grumpy by her own choosing, and they are able to support each other when needed. Snow White is no longer being taken advantage of for her beauty, but she is an equal partner in the friendship.

Another way Snow White's character depicts gender stereotypes is through her romantic relationship with the Prince. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, Snow White and the Prince are only together in two places. This seems strange as Snow White focuses on finding her prince and living happily ever after with him throughout the movie. The first scene where Snow White is with the Prince is in the beginning of the movie when Snow White is singing by the well and the Prince hears her beautiful voice. He is entranced by her voice's beauty and follows the sound to Snow White. He gazes over the wall and stares at Snow White, without her knowledge, and listens to her song. In this moment, the Prince is staring at Snow White without her permission. He is falling in love with her based upon ideals like her singing voice and her beauty. As she continues her song, he sneaks up next to her and frightens her. This part of the movie is important because it is the first interaction between the Prince and Snow White. When Snow White runs away, he begs her to come back. He begins to sing to Snow White and this is where she falls madly in love with him. In this interaction, they do not speak or get to know one another, yet both fall madly in love with each other. Their love is based on physical attractiveness. This perpetuates the idea that females are valued for their looks and males are able to prey upon females at their desire. Unfortunately for Snow White, the Queen sees this interaction with the Prince and her jealousy is enraged even more towards Snow White.

Throughout the movie, Snow White wishes for a man. She is focused on finding a man that will make her forever happy, yet she is complacent with just waiting for him to find her.

One of the most famous songs Snow White sings during the film is “Someday My Prince Will Come” (Disney 57:00). The lyrics of the song suggest that she is confident that he will come for her, but she doesn’t have to do anything to make that happen. If she waits, her true love will come to find her. This demonstrates the passivity Snow White has in regard to her romantic relationships. This connects with the female gender expectations that females should be pure and innocent. Snow White should not chase after a man, but she should instead wait for him to come to her. By doing so, Snow White upholds the feminine value of sexual purity. Snow White is unable to have other male romantic relationships throughout the film because she must wait for her prince to come to her. As she waits, she uses her interactions with the dwarfs to prepare herself to be a good, domestic wife that will please the Prince.

The Prince does come to find her. However, the next time the Prince sees Snow White is when she is dead in the glass coffin. Laura Mulvey’s piece “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” is helpful in analyzing this coffin scene. This scene confirms Laura Mulvey’s ideas on scopophilia, or pleasure in looking, and the male gaze (2086). Mulvey claims that humans find pleasure in looking upon others, as well as finding pleasure in being looked at. In this scene, we, as audience members, look upon Snow White as she is lying helplessly in the coffin. Snow White is unable to stop this gaze, and the audience finds pleasure in being able to watch her without her permission. The audience is also given the opportunity to see the Prince, watching Snow White. We identify with the Prince and gaze with him at Snow White, objectifying her and leaving her with no control over who watches her. This is an example of Mulvey’s claim that cinema allows people to observe an “unknowing and unwilling victim” (2086). Here, Snow White is the victim of voyeurism, and she cannot stop the audience or the Prince from looking at her from a position of power. Because Snow White is depicted in this glass coffin, exemplifying her beauty, the audience gazes at her sexually, enjoying her beauty and inability to control what

happens to her. Suddenly, the scene's focus changes to the Prince. This change over to the Prince is what Mulvey explains as narcissistic scopophilia. He becomes the object of the viewer's attention, as he is expected to save the life of the helpless Snow White.

In the coffin scene in the *Disney* film, a Snow White is shown as not having an active role in saving her own life and must simply wait for assistance from a male character (Prince Charming). Even though these two characters do not know each other (except for a brief singing encounter in the beginning), when the Prince kisses Snow White, she awakens from true love's kiss. Snow White has been innocently unaware of her situation being in her lifeless state. She stretches and looks around looking as though she has awakened from a good night's sleep. It takes her 20 seconds before she even realizes the Prince is there. During this time, the audience watches her just like the Prince is watching her too. This connects back to Mulvey's ideas that "women [are] displayed as sexual object[s] . . . she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire" (2088). The audience sees the Prince gaze upon Snow White with desire. He feels he has the right to be able to kiss her without her permission and take her to his palace afterwards. Once Snow White awakens from her curse, her passivity and innocence is shown as she clearly was not expecting this man to be there and had no idea that she was in danger, while at the same time she has been hoping for the Prince to come and sweep her off her feet. Without any questions and without any dialogue between the characters, Snow White instantly reaches for the Prince and taken to the Prince's horse. While Snow White is carried by the Prince, the female's weakness and dependency is revealed. Even though she could walk herself, she communicates her dependence on a male by allowing herself to be carried by this man she does not really know.

The coffin scene ends with Snow White saying goodbye to her dwarf friends and leaving the scene to live with her Prince—that she has just met. Snow White in this film is displayed as

a character who needs a man to take care of her and watch out for her. She must leave everything she has ever known to be with the male character. The final image is a wide screen shot of Snow White sitting on the horse side saddle because she cannot be expected to sit the same way as a man. The Prince is leading Snow White away from her home and her friends towards his castle. Snow White, who is shown to be happy, is expected to leave her life behind to support her prince in their love. This is the entirety of the relationship between Snow White and the Prince in the animated film. The audience does not see them develop a relationship. We are only able to see that Snow White wants to please the Prince and he wants to love a beautiful woman. This upholds the patriarchal view of a romantic male-female relationship that the female must be beautiful and domestic.

In the TV show, Snow White's character is represented in a feminist way because she has equal power to other characters. This was missing in the *Disney* film. In the film, any character who Snow White encountered demonstrated more power and control over her. Throughout the film, the Prince dominated Snow White's feelings and actions. She based her life on becoming more desirable for him instead of becoming a better version of herself for her own benefit. Throughout her relationship with the Prince in the film, Snow White demonstrates that she has little agency in her life. However, in the TV show, Snow White is shown as an equal partner in the relationship with the Prince. She has the ability to make her own decisions instead of being forced into them. She also can give and take in a relationship. She depends on the Prince, but he also depends on her. Instead of the relationships being one sided, like in the *Disney* version, the relationships Snow White has with others are equal.

OUAT opens with the glass coffin scene. As I previously mentioned, in the Disney film, this was the scene where Snow White was on display and gazed upon for her beauty. Both the dwarfs and the Prince used this as an opportunity to view Snow White. In the film, Snow White

was only valued for her beauty. Initially, these scenes seem to mirror each other. Snow White is presumed to be dead in a glass coffin, the dwarfs are mourning her death, and the Prince comes upon her. However, one major difference in the TV scene is the emotion the audience sees in the Prince. In *OUAT*, the Prince and the dwarfs speak to one another in a familiar manner (1.1 1:17). The prince even asks the dwarfs if he can say goodbye to Snow White. This tells the audience that Snow White and the Prince have a previous connection and relationship because the dwarfs know who he is and what relationship he has with Snow White. No longer is he a random stranger they allow to kiss Snow White, but instead the audience feels as though Snow White and the Prince know each other on a deep level. Once the Prince kisses Snow White and wakes her, she responds, “You found me,” and he replies, “Did you ever doubt I would?” (2:02). This further supports the idea that Snow White and the Prince know each other and have a relationship. I feel that this is a feminist representation of this scene because Snow White is being saved by someone she knows and with whom she has built a relationship. This scene is not viewed as an invasion of Snow White’s body because they have developed a romantic relationship and she was expecting him to find her, as in the Disney film.

Also in Episode 1, Snow White demonstrates agency as she and Prince Charming get married. As they are saying their vows, the Evil Queen shows up unannounced (2:38). The Evil Queen approaches the newlyweds as she uses magic to push the guards out of her way. Snow White looks on in horror, but she reaches for Prince Charming’s sword announcing that the Queen is “nothing more than an evil witch” (3:01). Snow White threatens the Evil Queen with the sword, but Prince Charming tries to talk Snow White out of hurting her. This demonstrates a role reversal because Snow White is the one protecting herself and others versus the Prince. She takes an active and dominant role early on, demonstrating a very different Snow White than the one in the Disney film. Snow White is depicted as a character with instant agency, something

the Disney Snow White was lacking severely. The show begins by showing an updated version of Snow White, one that has the freedom to make her own choices and stand up for herself and others. This is something that Disney's Snow White was unable to do because she was limited in the choices she could make.

One of the major ways that *OUAT*'s Snow White is vastly different from Disney's Snow White is how she interacts with Prince Charming. In the Disney movie, Snow White and Prince Charming have an awkward encounter in the beginning of the movie, where the Prince startles a singing Snow White. She flees from him, but then instantly falls in love with him waiting for him to find her and wed her. This passive and coy approach to love demonstrates a lack of agency as she is waiting for the Prince to act in order for their relationship to move forward. In this case, the Prince is given all the power and choice in whether to pursue Snow White for marriage. Conversely, the TV show depicts this relationship in a much more dynamic and complex way, thus portraying the equal dynamics between Snow White and the Prince that was missing from the Disney film.

Snow White and Prince Charming develop their relationship in *Once Upon a Time*, whereas the relationship in the Disney version immediately happens. There isn't much complexity to the relationship between Snow White and the Prince in the film. Snow White and the Prince see each other one time, fall in love, and run off in the end to live happily ever after. The film fails to show the shared power dynamics within a relationship or the development of the relationship. In *OUAT*, these issues in the film are changed allowing for a more feminist portrayal of a romantic relationship between a female and male character. I argue that relationships are more feminist when power is shared. We see this in *OUAT* because Snow White and Prince Charming show equality within their relationship. Neither partner is more powerful nor dominating in the relationship than the other one. Instead of one gender

maintaining power over the other, this power is shared so both parties are equal in this relationship.

In Episode 3, Snow White meets Prince Charming for the first time. While Prince Charming is traveling, a log in the middle of the road causes his wagon to stop. As he joins his guards outside of the wagon, Prince Charming notices that the tree was purposely cut (1.3 2:14). Snow White demonstrates agency in this scene because she is active in her pursuit of money so she can leave town and save her life from the Queen. In this moment, Snow White makes an active decision to set them up so she can get what she needs to survive and be protected. This is a stark contrast to the *Disney* Snow White, who is afraid of standing up for herself. Instead of waiting for others to save her, the TV show Snow White takes an active role in saving herself. Prince Charming takes off after Snow White. After he catches up to her, he pins her to the ground and exclaims in surprise, “You’re a . . . girl . . .” (3:00). Snow White smiles and states, “Woman,” and then punches him with a rock. I love this line because Snow White makes sure that Prince Charming knows she is a woman before she knocks him out cold. She is proud of being a strong woman and dislikes that Prince Charming is surprised a female would be capable of setting them up. Also, Snow White makes a clear distinction to the Prince that she is a woman, not a girl. I believe that she dislikes the idea of being compared to a child, feeling as though he is equating females to children. She knows she is much stronger than a child, and she lets him know she is a grown woman with more power than a girl before she knocks him out. Snow White stands up to Prince Charming, focusing on her own happiness and safety with no regard for his feelings or desire towards her. In this way, she is shown with the agency that she never had in the *Disney* film.

Furthermore, in Episode 3, Snow White and Prince Charming continue to establish their relationship, which differs from the Disney version. Snow White has stolen Charming’s jewels

and is walking alone in the forest. She is captured by a hidden net, and Prince Charming comes out laughing. When Snow White realizes it is him, she sarcastically states, “Is this the only way you can catch a woman? By entrapping her?” (1.3 12:52). This line alludes to the *Disney* film. *Disney* shows Snow White as being trapped by the glass coffin, and Prince Charming is finally able to find her and kiss her only when she is cursed to sleep. By alluding to this scene from the *Disney* movie, the *OUAT* writers are pointing out the difference in how their Snow White relates to the Prince. Instead of being entrapped in the relationship with him, she is free to choose her own feelings and develop a relationship with him based on experiences together. The allusion to the *Disney* film continues when Snow states, “True love, it doesn’t exist . . . There’s no such thing as love at first sight, or first kiss” (13:56). Again, here the writers bring to the attention of the audience how the *Disney* depiction of the relationship between Snow and Charming is wrong. In the Disney version, Snow White did not develop a relationship with the Prince; rather, it was formed only based on the idealized version of true love and love’s first kiss. The new conception of love based on shared experiences in the TV show is more empowering for Snow White than the *Disney* version of love at first sight. This is because the TV show portrays that true love isn’t based on physical appearance, but instead it is based on experiences and getting to know someone’s personality. By demonstrating Snow White as building a relationship with the Prince, *OUAT* gives more agency to her character. Snow White is able to develop feelings for the Prince naturally and she chooses to fall in love with him. In the *Disney* version, she was not given the opportunity to find out what the Prince was like before she declared him her true love.

As the episode continues, Snow White is given more opportunities to develop her relationship with Charming based on her own choices, feelings, and desires. While initially neither Snow White nor Charming are thrilled to be with each other, they begin to develop feelings for one another based on learning each other’s values and personality. Though Snow

White and Charming are pushed into interacting with one another, this journey together gives them time to get to know each other. By the time they get to the Troll Bridge, it is at this point in their relationship that they develop mutual respect. The trolls decide to attack Snow and Charming, but Snow White and Charming both work together to stand up to them. Charming distracts the trolls so Snow White can get away, and she returns the favor by using black fairy dust to save the Prince (1.3 30:48). Snow White and Charming demonstrate an equality in their relationship from the beginning that is missing in the *Disney* film. Rather than being based upon superficial guidelines such as singing voices and beauty, their relationship can develop based on personalities and positive interactions. Snow White stands up for herself from the beginning of the TV show, solidifying the audience's view of her as a powerful and decisive female character. By allowing Snow White to make decisions about her interactions with the Prince and depicting her as his equal in terms of fighting and saving others, Snow White is given agency from the beginning of the season that she was never given in the Disney film.

Where Snow White was immediately desiring the relationship with the Prince in *Disney*'s version, in the TV version, Snow White is more reluctant to give up everything for her Prince. Snow White and Prince Charming go their separate ways, but only after they have started to develop feelings for each other. In Episode 10, Snow White confides in her close friend, Red, that she wishes she could get Charming out of her head (1.10 5:52). This is different from the Disney version because, in the film, Snow White constantly wishes to be with the Prince. Now, Snow White is wishing she could just forget him. Her focus is on her happiness, not on finding a man. For her, she feels she would be happier not remembering her encounter with the Prince. Snow White is so desperate to forget the Prince that she asks the Dark One for help to forget him (1.10 7:50). Snow White is shown as a rational person able to make clear decisions not based on emotion. She is aware that she will forever feel the heartbreak from this memory of Prince

Charming, and she understands that she needs to move on and cannot allow herself to be attached to this man. Snow White is rational because she thinks about her situation and makes a choice about giving up her longing feelings towards Prince Charming so she can move on and live a happy life without him. After obtaining the potion, Snow White ultimately chooses not to take the potion even after her heartbreak becomes unbearable. She, instead, chooses to work through her pain with the help of her dwarf friends.

Throughout the TV show, Snow White's character is revised to deconstruct the film's patriarchal viewpoint. Where Disney's Snow White upholds gender stereotypes, *Once Upon a Time*'s Snow White challenges them. Snow White is finally given a voice, a backstory, a personality, and agency. She is able to develop relationships based out of shared experiences and equalities, like those she has with the dwarfs and the Prince. She can make active decisions that save her life, and the lives of those around her, instead of waiting passively. She is given female relationships where she is free to make choices regarding her actions. By writing her in this way, the creators of *OUAT* offers audience members a retelling of the traditional story, thus reconstructing how we view Snow White. She is no longer a weak female whose merits are solely based on her beauty. Through the revision to her character, she becomes a strong female who demands respect and control in her life. Chapter 2 will elaborate upon these claims that Snow White's character represents a feminist retelling. This chapter will focus on the curse placed upon Snow White and her transition from Mary Margaret back to Snow White.

Chapter 2: The Feminist Transformation of Mary Margaret

In the first season of *Once Upon a Time*, Snow White's character is represented in multiple different ways. Throughout the season, the audience views flashback scenes of Snow White before the curse. As explained in Chapter 1 of this thesis, this representation of Snow White before the curse is feminist because she demonstrates agency. However, when Snow White is cursed by the Evil Queen (Regina) to live as Mary Margaret in Storybrooke, Maine, she is stripped of her agency and ultimately her happiness. Mary Margaret lives in this cursed state for many years until Emma Swan is convinced to come to Storybrooke. When Emma arrives, a change happens with Mary Margaret's character. As the relationships between Emma and the other characters in the show grow, things in the town begin to change. Characters begin to gain back their memories, and the curse begins to fade. Mary Margaret slowly begins to develop agency as the season progresses, until the curse is broken, and she gains her memories back. By the end of the season, Mary Margaret remembers who she really is and she is once again the revised feminist representation of Snow White's character.

Disney's Snow White is almost entirely represented via stereotypes of femininity, similarly to how Mary Margaret's character is represented at the beginning of *OUAT*. Mary Margaret in *OUAT* also conforms to traditional gender roles when in her cursed form. By conforming to these traditional gender roles, Mary Margaret is representing how women are cursed with society's ideals and traditions for what it means to be a woman. Unlike the feminist update of Snow White from before the curse, the cursed version of Snow White's character (Mary Margaret) is a direct parallel to the 1937 depiction of Snow White because Mary Margaret replicates the female gender conventions found in the *Disney Snow White* film. This can be seen when the cursed Mary Margaret falls back into her old tropes of being motherly, dependent on males, and weak in the 1937 film. Through this representation, the show demonstrates that

subjecting women to these stereotypical female actions would be a curse, or a negative way of living. In other words, Mary Margaret's curse is to be trapped as an outdated gender role character forever. In her cursed state, Mary Margaret represents the myth of the woman, or the gender stereotypes put upon women in a patriarchal society and their inability to escape them. Females in *OUAT*'s society are cursed to follow the traditional roles outlined by society and upheld by Snow White in the animated film.

In the original Disney film, the only power Snow White had was her beauty. When Mary Margaret is cursed, the audience notices is that she is stripped of her traditional patriarchal route of power, her beauty. Mary Margaret looks vastly different from how she looks when she is Snow White. Mary Margaret is plain and regular looking; she is no longer the epitome of beauty and youth, as in the *Disney* film. She has very short, boyish cut hair. She wears clothing such as sweaters and cardigans that covers her completely instead of accentuating her feminine physique. Mary Margaret does not have her beauty to resist the systems of power in the cursed land.

Mary Margaret's character demonstrates this lack of control over male characters in Episode 3 when she goes on a date with the local doctor. While on this date, the doctor is heavily distracted by one of the waitresses who more closely relates to a stereotypical beautiful woman than Mary Margaret does. While Mary Margaret talks about what she desires, the doctor stares at the beautiful waitress. Mary Margaret notices what is happening, becomes upset, and ends the date. In this moment early in the season, the audience sees that Mary Margaret is not the object of male desire. She is unable to control him using her beauty like Snow White did. Mary Margaret attempts to gain male approval by sharing ideas and stories, but she is shut down and replaced by a woman that fits the male desire. She is visibly unhappy with this outcome, further supporting the idea that her happiness is dependent on how males view her. In this case, she feels inadequate in her appearance in comparison to Ruby and chooses to end her date. Mary

Margaret desperately wants male desire, but she is unable to obtain it due to her lack of beauty. She demonstrates her submissiveness towards this doctor by not confronting him about his wandering eyes. Instead of calling him out, Mary Margaret simply asks for the check so she can leave. By no longer having her beauty, Mary Margaret is unable to gain approval from other male characters or demonstrate agency in her life. She is cursed to remain powerless and unhappy in Storybrooke, unable to obtain the desire of those around her to help her. At this point of the curse, Mary Margaret lives an unhappy life, unable to change her circumstances.

Though Mary Margaret's physical appearance does not uphold traditional gender roles, her actions do. While Mary Margaret is under the influence of the curse, she is depicted in ways that uphold stereotypical female gender roles. This is like the way Snow White is shown in the Disney film. One of the stereotypes Mary Margaret upholds while she is cursed is the idea that females are caretakers. While Disney's Snow White cared for the dwarfs as if they were children, Mary Margaret cares for actual children in Storybrooke. Mary Margaret's character is a teacher for elementary aged children. The first time the audience sees Mary Margaret is when she is teaching in her classroom (1.1). She is teaching and she is having the children make a bird home. This scene reprises the 1937 film when it features Mary Margaret teaching children in Storybrooke much in the same way Snow White takes care of the dwarfs and teaches them life skills. In the article titled "Art, Adaptation, and Ideology: Walt Disney's *Snow White* and the *Seven Dwarfs*," author Thomas Inge presents the claim that the Disney film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* depicts the female role as showing "allegiance to the home and family," showing Snow White in "the role of the mother" and "creat[ing] a sense of domestic harmony" (Inge 141). I see this depiction in Mary Margaret's character as well because she is assuming the role of the mother by taking care of children. This supports a patriarchal society where female characters are expected to care for children, even those who are not their own. Mary Margaret

creates this “domestic harmony” by taking on the role of the supportive teacher who selflessly helps children every day. She takes care of Henry by helping him with his relationship with his biological mother (Emma), while putting herself at risk from Regina’s (Henry’s adoptive mother’s) anger. Mary Margaret desires to help Henry overcome his difficulties in his relationship with Regina and Emma. She supports Henry early in the season, especially in Episodes 1 and 2, by introducing him to the fairy tale book and listening to his struggles.

Furthermore, Mary Margaret’s character upholds traditional female values in her depiction as a teacher in this cursed world. This demonstrates the idea that women should be motherly and caregivers for others. One of the major consequences of this curse is that Snow White loses the ability to choose her profession when she becomes Mary Margaret. Regina curses Mary Margaret to be a teacher instead of the powerful queen she was in the fairy tale land. To curse Mary Margaret as a teacher who must abide by strict rules for the rest of her life traps her in this stereotypical role for women. Mary Margaret is unable to choose this role for herself, but she is pushed to abide by female stereotypes to raise children. The fact that she is not given the choice of whether to be put into a role of child rearing is not a feminist depiction. I feel that Mary Margaret’s curse is that she, like many females in society, is forced into this role by Regina that reinforces traditional standards for women such as women are teachers, mothers, and selfless caretakers. In this case, she is forced into this role through magical means, and she is too afraid to stand up to Regina. Just like how Snow White instantly becomes the mother figure to the seven dwarfs, who she views as children in need, Mary Margaret becomes the mother figure to the children of Storybrooke.

Mary Margaret further supports traditional gender roles through her dialogue in the classroom in Episode 1. In this scene, Mary Margaret tells the students, “As we build our birdhouses remember, what you’re making is a home, not a cage. The bird is free and will do

what it will. This is for them, not us. They're loyal creatures. If you love them and they love you, they will always find you" (1.1 27:10-27:37). She then pauses and stares as if in a dream.

In these few lines, Mary Margaret demonstrates a traditional female role because she is demonstrating traits commonly associated with being female. She emphasizes that they are creating a "home" for birds, much like females must create a home for their husbands and children. Mary Margaret also makes the distinction that this birdhouse is "for them, not us." Mary Margaret is arguing that the children need to be selfless, and their actions must help those around them, much like how traditional women in society must be selfless and have actions that help the men around them. Her words emphasize the importance of loyalty. Traditionally, women are expected to be loyal in relationships with men and loyal to their domestic duties in the home. Finally, she ends with a focus on love. This is an allusion to Snow White in the animated film and how she focuses on finding her Prince Charming throughout the whole movie. This is not a feminist representation of a female character because Mary Margaret is unable to choose whether she wants to uphold traditional gender roles by being motherly, loyal, and dependent on males for happiness or resist them. Instead of being given the choice, she is forced into the stereotypical female gender role.

At the end of Episode 1, Mary Margaret's character continues to support a traditional gender stereotype that females are caretakers. Mary Margaret is dedicating her time to working at the local hospital. As if she doesn't already have enough work in her normal job as a teacher, she wants to do even more to help other people. She offers comfort to those in the hospital by placing flowers next to each bed and stopping to offer encouragement to patients. Not only does Mary Margaret care for children, but she also cares for the sick. She is doing this extra job in her free time which shows her devotion and desire to help and care for others. After checking on the other patients, Mary Margaret enters a room which contains a man identified as a John Doe.

This is the first time that the audience sees Mary Margaret and David (aka Prince Charming) together in the cursed world; however, only the audience knows who he is. Unfortunately, part of the curse is that David is in a coma, and Mary Margaret has no idea who he is. In this scene, Mary Margaret makes sure to set flowers by this John Doe. Even though she cannot have a conversation with this man, she still fulfills her duty to care for him as she would any other patient.

Another scene that demonstrates Mary Margaret is cursed with actions that align with traditional gender roles is in the scene discussed above when she is on the date with the local doctor in Episode 3. The scene jumps into the date mid conversation where the two are discussing the topic of whether Mary Margaret wants kids. Her date misunderstands what Mary Margaret presumably had said off screen, and this scene opens with him asking, “Where were we . . . something about you wanting 15 kids?” (1.3 3:41). This immediately brings the focus back to Mary Margaret and her stance on whether she should have children. Stereotypically, women should be motherly and devote their lives to having kids. Fortunately for Mary Margaret, she doesn’t want fifteen kids. Further in the conversation, Mary Margaret states, “I mean obviously I don’t want 15 kids of my own. I-I mean, not that I don’t want kids. I do. I want kids, marriage, true love” (4:00). This dialogue demonstrates that Mary Margaret upholds the stereotype that females should desire kids, marriage, and true love. This supports the traditional gender role for females as mothers and loyal wives.

Another example of Mary Margaret falling into a traditional female role is her inability to have a positive female relationship with Kathryn. The relationship between Mary Margaret and Kathryn is similar to the relationship between the Queen and Snow White in the Disney film. Mary Margaret and Kathryn develop a conflicted relationship based upon jealousy and competition for male desire. This is a stereotypical representation of female relationships in

which these two females have a one-dimensional relationship defined by gender stereotypes.

Kathryn is a new character introduced to the original Snow White fairy tale, but she represents a character who is similar to the Queen in *Snow White*. The Queen and Snow White were in conflict over the Prince's affection like how Mary Margaret and Kathryn are in conflict over David's affection. Part of Mary Margaret's and David's curses is that they cannot be together. First, David is separated from Mary Margaret by being in a coma. However, when he awakens from this coma, he finds himself married to a woman named Kathryn. Mary Margaret is drawn to David, even while he is in a coma, and those feelings towards him develop into romance throughout the first half of the season. The relationship between Kathryn and Mary Margaret is based on jealousy and competition for this man's love.

Initially, Mary Margaret becomes infatuated with David when he is a coma patient. In Episode 3, Mary Margaret struggles when she learns that the man she has been caring for while he was in a coma has a wife. When she is told he is married, she is shocked and upset at this fact. Even when Kathryn kindly thanks Mary Margaret for helping David, Mary Margaret immediately questions why Kathryn never came to see David in the hospital. Mary Margaret and Kathryn are introduced as characters who are in immediate conflict with one another over the love of David, much like how Snow White and the Queen are shown in conflict in the 1937 film. As Kathryn and David embrace at the end of Episode 3, the audience sees that Mary Margaret is clearly upset over their affection. This is where Mary Margaret's jealousy begins towards Kathryn. Mary Margaret is still cursed to have a relationship based upon jealousy, only this time she is the one with the vengeful feelings. Mary Margaret's cursed character represents the gender stereotype that females cannot have meaningful friendships. She can only find happiness when she is able to overcome jealous feelings towards another female.

In Episode 5, this jealousy towards Kathryn continues, demonstrating that Mary Margaret is still cursed with female stereotypes. Mary Margaret is walking with David at the hospital when Kathryn unexpectedly shows up to speak to David and give him muffins, demonstrating her willfulness to be a domestic wife to David. While Kathryn is speaking to David, Mary Margaret stares at her uncomfortable with her presence. She does not like Kathryn impeding on her time with David. As she leaves unhappily, she is validated by David who tells her he will see her tomorrow. This fuels Mary Margaret's feelings of jealousy towards Kathryn because she sees hope in the relationship with David. She wants to be with David, and she wants Kathryn to go away. This sends the message that women are jealous of each other by nature, and men are not responsible for their actions. This scene furthers the idea that stereotypical female relationships are based on competition, lies, and envy. David has pitted these female characters against each other by leading each of them on. David has told both females that he wants to be with them. He tells Kathryn that he wants to work on their relationship but at the same time he is telling Mary Margaret that he will break up with Kathryn to be with her. Instead of collaborating, the females are driven to fighting. David should be the one who their anger is directed towards, not each other.

As the season progresses, Mary Margaret and David develop a romantic relationship even though he is still married to Kathryn. While he is seeing Mary Margaret in secret, he is promising to work on his relationship with Kathryn. Ultimately in Episode 13 David breaks up with Kathryn and she finds out about his affair. Mary Margaret had harbored feelings of jealousy and anger towards Kathryn, but until this point it had not been reciprocated. As soon as Kathryn finds out that David was cheating on her, she instantly has feelings of anger and resentment towards Mary Margaret further demonstrating the unhealthy relationship between these two females. Kathryn shows up unexpectedly at Mary Margaret's work, slaps her and

shows her anger with Mary Margaret at breaking up her marriage with the affair. Kathryn does not choose to confront David, the man who lied to her, but chooses to confront Mary Margaret, a female. Kathryn chooses to project her anger and frustrations onto Mary Margaret, showing that neither female character can have a healthy relationship with another female.

All of this connects with Virginia Woolf's concept in *A Room of One's Own* "that when a woman speaks to women she should have something very unpleasant up her sleeve. Women are hard on women. Women dislike women" (93). Kathryn has motives in meeting with Mary Margaret at her work, to call her out for the affair and expose her for being a liar and a cheat. None of this anger is directed towards David, who is the person she should really be angry at. As for Mary Margaret, she never had positive intentions with her relationship with Kathryn. She only conversed with her when required to and otherwise spent her time trying to break David and Kathryn up. Much like what Woolf noticed in dramas of her time, the relationship between these two women was based on jealousy and competition for a male character. Mary Margaret couldn't like Kathryn, much like Cleopatra couldn't like Octavia. The relationship between Mary Margaret and Kathryn is not salvageable while the curse of patriarchy remains. Kathryn ultimately chooses to leave Storybrooke for a new beginning in life. On her way out of Storybrooke, she goes missing and is presumed dead when her heart is found. Mary Margaret is blamed for her murder and ultimately arrested in Episode 16. Most people in the town believe that Mary Margaret killed Kathryn over jealousy. This is further supported by planted evidence, which people in the town use to confirm their suspicions that Mary Margaret killed Kathryn. Mary Margaret is an easy target because of the troubled relationship she has with Kathryn based on lies, adultery, and jealousy. When Mary Margaret is interviewed by a lawyer in Episode 18 she states, "Of course I wanted her gone. She was the only thing that was keeping us apart!" (13:12). Mary Margaret is cursed by this jealousy and cannot let go of it, even under such

difficult circumstances. While she declares her innocence throughout the next few episodes, no one except Emma believes in her. She has no evidence to disprove the claims that she killed Kathryn over jealousy. Ultimately, these scenes support the stereotype that female relationships are based upon competition and jealousy. Mary Margaret demonstrates this unhealthy female relationship with Kathryn by allowing jealousy to consume her life. She is charged with Kathryn's murder and loses all her agency when she is put in a jail cell. The curse placed upon her keeps her locked in the stereotypical jealous relationship.

Mary Margaret's relationship with Kathryn ultimately does not change. When Kathryn is found alive and well, she meets up with David and discusses their relationship and ultimately their break-up. They can have closure and apologize for their actions. However, Kathryn and Mary Margaret never speak to each other. Kathryn's character has closure with David but not with Mary Margaret. Kathryn's character leaves the show without ever speaking to Mary Margaret. This female relationship demonstrates how Mary Margaret was cursed with female gender stereotypes in her relationship with another female. Her character does not demonstrate growth here, remaining jealous and angry over Kathryn and David's romantic relationship.

As the season progresses, Mary Margaret's character changes in her relationships with other characters. When Emma comes into town, she is the key to breaking the curse. Mary Margaret develops a close relationship with Emma, which allows her to develop into a stronger female character. As Mary Margaret builds closer female relationships and creates new memories, she begins to stand up for herself. Their bond is complex because it represents the friendship between females but also has undertones of a mother-daughter relationship. While the *Disney* Snow White only found happiness through male characters like the dwarfs and the Prince, *OUAT*'s Snow White can have a female friend, which ultimately sets her on the path to rediscovering herself and breaking through the curse of patriarchy.

While in *Once Upon a Time* Mary Margaret's character is given the opportunity to have more female relationships, she is still cursed with the same problems as seen in the 1937 version. In the beginning of the curse, Mary Margaret does not seem to have many friends in Storybrooke, similar to the 1937 film Snow White. However, as the curse begins to fade, Mary Margaret develops relationships with many people. Throughout these relationships, she struggles to find her agency. With female characters, Mary Margaret struggles to overcome the stereotypes placed upon female relationships. With male characters, Mary Margaret struggles with equal representation. There are moments where she overcomes these challenges and moments where she succumbs to the challenges. These moments demonstrate her struggle with overcoming gender stereotypes.

In the next paragraphs, I will describe the trajectory of Mary Margaret's character through the beginning, middle, and end of the season. In the beginning, Mary Margaret's character is similar to the 1937 Snow White. Throughout the middle of the season, Mary Margaret struggles with finding her power and confidence. As the season ends, Mary Margaret can find her voice and stand up for herself. By the end of the season, Mary Margaret's cursed character is no longer forced to uphold the patriarchy.

In the beginning of the season, one of the challenges Mary Margaret struggles to overcome is demonstrating her agency with Regina. Regina is the one with the power because she is responsible for cursing all the characters. Regina is able to manipulate Mary Margaret and destroy everything she held dear in the fairy tale land. Currently, Mary Margaret does not stand up to Regina and seems to show fear towards her. Starting in Episode 1, Mary Margaret expresses unease of being around Regina. When speaking with Henry or Emma, she is careful with what she says about Regina, for fear of retaliation. The first season is focused on the unhealthy relationship between Regina and Mary Margaret, where Regina attempts to get

revenge on Mary Margaret for destroying her life. Jealousy and rage fuel Regina against Mary Margaret. One way Regina keeps control over Mary Margaret is by cursing her to be alone both with romance and friendship. When the curse is enacted, Mary Margaret places her child (who we later find out is Emma) into a tree to teleport her to safety. Then, the love of her life is taken from her and all the memories of their past lives are taken away. By keeping Mary Margaret alone, she is able to control her and strip her of her power.

Mary Margaret's relationship with Regina is based on lies, manipulation, and fear. For example, in Episode 2, Regina interrupts Mary Margaret's teaching to tell her that she needs to speak with Henry. Instead of standing up to her and telling Regina no, she allows Henry to be taken from class (1.3.34:14). This demonstrates that Regina has authority over Mary Margaret, and Mary Margaret is passive. She allows Regina to do or say whatever she wants without standing up for herself. This is like Snow White's relationship with the Queen in the *Disney* film because both Snow White and Mary Margaret do not stand up for themselves and allow the Queen/Regina to do as she pleases. Throughout the first season, Regina attempts to destroy Mary Margaret's life by taking away everything she has ever loved. This is in line with traditional representations of women conflicting with one another like I mentioned in Chapter 1. Regina enjoys controlling Mary Margaret and making her life unhappy. She enjoys that she was able to destroy the family Snow White had built. Because of this, Mary Margaret is not able to develop a healthy relationship with Regina.

This beginning relationship alludes to the unstable relationship between Snow White and the Queen in the 1937 film. Their relationship is also based on lies, jealousy, and manipulation. Snow White is tricked into eating the apple by the Queen, while Mary Margaret is tricked into believing she is not Snow White. In both versions, the Queen/Regina wants to destroy all of Snow White's happiness. This complex relationship is not a feminist portrayal because it shows

that women are against each other and are incapable of being close. Mary Margaret and Regina could work together to both live happy lives, instead they are unable to move past their issues. Until Mary Margaret and Regina can work through their relationship issues, they both are unable to be happy.

In the middle of the season, Mary Margaret begins to stand up to Regina. As she challenges Regina, she demonstrates small moments of resistance towards the stereotypical female relationship based on jealousy and conflict. Some of these small moments are, for example, when Mary Margaret helps Emma develop a close relationship with Henry despite Regina's wishes. Also, when Mary Margaret continues to develop a romantic relationship with David despite Regina's threats and warnings to drive them apart. These small changes represent the resistance Mary Margaret shows to being like the original Snow White. Where the Queen demonstrated power and control over Snow White, Regina starts to lose her power and control over Mary Margaret as the show progresses.

Another small instance of this change is when Mary Margaret is framed for the murder of Kathryn in Episode 16. At this time, the audience knows that Regina planted evidence to implicate Mary Margaret in the murder of Kathryn, but the characters in the show do not. When Mary Margaret is arrested, she is brought into an interrogation room to be interviewed by Emma. As she walks into the room, Mary Margaret sees that Regina is sitting there. Mary Margaret shows a look of concern and surprise that Regina is going to be present for the interview. This shows the effect Regina has on her. Mary Margaret instantly is worried just to see her in the room. While being interviewed, Mary Margaret outlines the events leading up to the disappearance of Kathryn. While she shares her story, Regina tries to assert her dominance over her. Regina stares at Mary Margaret with judgement and anger; however, Mary Margaret stares directly at Regina and powerfully declares that she is a good person and did not kill Kathryn. As

Regina tries to intimidate Mary Margaret, she stands up to her saying, “I did not do this!” (1.16 7:42). This is one of the first moments where Mary Margaret overtly stands up to Regina. Instead of admitting guilt like Regina wants, Mary Margaret defends herself and declares her innocence. However, Regina ultimately retains control over Mary Margaret by manipulating everyone around her. As she leaves the interrogation room with Emma, she states, “If that box was stolen from her like she claims, don’t you think there’d be signs of a break in? You’re her roommate. Tell me, has there been a break in?” (1.16 8:06). Emma is left to question her belief in Mary Margaret, demonstrating the control that Regina has over others. Regina is able to convince most people in the town that Mary Margaret is guilty. This isolates Mary Margaret, leaving her little chance of standing up for herself. The scene ends with Emma looking at Mary Margaret, seemingly questioning her innocence.

Mary Margaret’s resistance to Regina’s dominance continues in Episode 18 when Regina visits Mary Margaret in the jail. Even as Regina tries to assert her power over Mary Margaret and pressure her to confess, Mary Margaret stays strong. This episode really shows the struggle Mary Margaret has with asserting herself over Regina’s control. At times she is strong and able to stand up to her, and other times she is not able to. This demonstrates the challenges Mary Margaret has with breaking past the woman she is cursed to be and overcoming the relationship issues that plague her in this cursed state. Regina is staring Mary Margaret down as she sleeps in her cell, frightening her when she wakes. Instantly, this throws Mary Margaret off and puts her in a scared and defensive place. Regina states that she has come to give Mary Margaret the “chance to confess” to Kathryn’s murder (1.18 6:41). Mary Margaret stands up, asserting dominance, and says, “But I didn’t kill Kathryn” (1.18 6:46). As Regina lists off the reasons why Mary Margaret will be found guilty, she too stands, and her voice becomes harsh. She demands that Mary Margaret “make it easier for everyone. Because confession or not, you’re

leaving Storybrooke" (1.18 7:09). She stares intensely at Mary Margaret, attempting to pressure her and pushing her to back down. However, Mary Margaret stands her ground and refuses to confess. At this moment, she is challenging Regina's control and authority. In the past, Regina could make her do whatever she wanted. As Mary Margaret's character develops, she begins to stand up to Regina. This shows how her character is evolving away from the stereotypical 1937 Snow White and into the strong feminist portrayal of Snow White from *OUAT*.

As Episode 18 continues, Regina returns to the jail cell to further assert her dominance over Mary Margaret, and Mary Margaret struggles to retain control. This time, Mary Margaret is dejected as Regina walks up, curled over with her head in her hands. This demonstrates a lack of power as she is in a weak and submissive position. Regina asserts that Mary Margaret will be found guilty at the trial the next day and she will enjoy "justice" (1.18 30:17). This shows how fixated Regina is on destroying Mary Margaret's life out of jealousy. This relationship is similar to the Disney film because Mary Margaret, like Snow White, is in a powerless position. Mary Margaret has no memories of why she has made Regina so angry, and her confusion as to why Regina hates her so much is apparent in this scene. In this moment, Regina holds the power over Mary Margaret, just like the Queen held the power over Snow White, because she remembers everything and is controlling Mary Margaret's life. There is nothing Mary Margaret can do to stop the trial, and nothing she can say to get people to believe her. She is reduced to the weakness and lack of control that Snow White had in the *Disney* movie. Even as Mary Margaret cries and tells Regina over and over that she is innocent and that she doesn't have anything to do with the murder, Regina smirks and remains strong. Mary Margaret tries to apologize to Regina, but she says she doesn't accept it. Again, she holds the power by controlling Mary Margaret's fate, emotions, and even her ability to apologize. In this moment, Mary Margaret regresses and loses her power. Mary Margaret is trying to fight for her life, but Regina retains the control.

At the end of the season in Episode 20, Mary Margaret stands up for herself to Regina. This represents the full change of Mary Margaret. She is no longer cursed to abide by Regina's orders and she is not fearful of retaliation by her. She is finally free to say and do what she wants. In this episode, Regina goes to Henry's school and asks Mary Margaret where he is. This is like the scene described above in Episode 2 when Regina visits Henry at school, only this time Mary Margaret stands up to Regina. In their conversation, Mary Margaret tells Regina that Henry is with his mother, Emma. The tone in her voice is strong and condescending. This is the first time that Mary Margaret is blatantly standing up to Regina. By telling Regina that Henry is with his mother, she is letting Regina know that she considers Emma to be Henry's real mother. This gives Mary Margaret power over Regina, as her relationship with Henry is the one thing Regina cares about. Regina recognizes this change in Mary Margaret's voice and asks her, "Is there a problem?" To which Mary Margaret replies, "Not anymore." Regina demonstrates surprise at this remark because she is used to Mary Margaret being submissive. Mary Margaret is not afraid to stand up to Regina because she was able to prove her innocence in the murder of Kathryn. Mary Margaret knows that Regina framed her, but she was still able to win her freedom. This gives Mary Margaret the confidence to stand up to Regina now as she is unafraid of what might happen. Throughout this conversation, Mary Margaret is strong and unwavering in her responses. She is quick to respond and stares at Regina intensely. All these actions demonstrate that Mary Margaret is strong in her sense of self and her authority. She is not representing a weak and scared female; instead, she is representing a strong and confident female. This change in Mary Margaret's character shows a rejection of the jealous, weak relationship she was cursed to have with Regina. Instead, Mary Margaret is standing up for herself, representing a more feminist dynamic in the relationship. Mary Margaret is able to say

no to Regina without fear. She has grown to understand that she has a voice in her relationship with Regina.

At the end of this scene in Episode 20, Mary Margaret is able to do something that Snow White never did in the 1937 film. She tells Regina she forgives her (1.20 8:49). With this statement, Mary Margaret can release herself from the grip of Regina and tell her that she is not afraid of her anymore. She tells her, “Your life must be filled with incredible loneliness if your only joy comes from destroying everyone else’s happiness. It’s so sad because despite what you think, it won’t make you happy” (1.20 9:18). Regina looks scared and shocked as Mary Margaret confesses her pity. Regina’s power is taken away as she realizes that she does not have control over Mary Margaret anymore. Also, Mary Margaret learns that she has the power to move on from her issues with Regina. Snow White was unable to move past these issues with the Queen in the animated film. The only way she was able to overcome the problems with the Queen was through the Queen’s death. Neither of them could live in a world together, so one of them died so the other could move on. In the TV show, Mary Margaret learns to assert herself over Regina in order to move on and find her happiness. This shows growth in her character, reflecting that females can exist together and move past their issues. A relationship does not need to be controlled by one individual.

[shorten and delete repetitiveness content in this paragraph that is discussed in the following paragraphs] Another relationship that shows Mary Margaret’s struggle with agency is her relationship with David. Throughout the first season, Mary Margaret shifts from being entirely dependent on David in the beginning of the first season to being more independent by the end of the first season. Mary Margaret spends most of this first season trying to find David and draw him to her romantically. This is similar to the 1937 film where Snow White spends much of the movie looking for her Prince Charming and hopes to convince him to be with her

romantically. The dependence upon a male character for romantic love and validation of the self demonstrates the reliance females traditionally have upon males. In the cursed world, Mary Margaret upholds this belief by showing that the only relationship she can have with a male is rooted in sexual attraction and desire for romance.

Just like how Snow White is shown as being dependent on male relationships for survival in *Disney's* film, Mary Margaret in *OUAT* is dependent upon David for her happiness. As mentioned previously, Mary Margaret is first drawn to David while he is in a coma. In Episodes 1 and 2, she develops strong feelings towards him, even though they never speak and never get to know each other. This is like how Snow White develops feelings towards the Prince in the *Disney* film. Both Snow White and Mary Margaret become infatuated and devoted to a man they never met. When David wakes up in Episode 3, Mary Margaret has already developed feelings for him. When she learns about Kathryn, she has feelings of jealousy towards her for being David's wife. However, their relationship continues romantically even though David is married. Throughout the season, David plays both women. For example, in Episode 5, Mary Margaret walks with David at the hospital and he makes her think that he desires a romantic relationship with her. When speaking about his relationship with Kathryn, David tells Mary Margaret, "None of it makes sense. None of it feels real" (1.5 28:15). He continues and tells the hopeful Mary Margaret that "one thing does feel real. You" (1.5 28:22). Mary Margaret looks at him with hopeful surprise, seemingly glad to hear that from him. David stares into her eyes and confesses that he feels right with her, making her feelings for him grow more. They lean towards each other for a kiss, but then Kathryn shows up and David goes to her immediately, afraid she may catch them together. David leaves Mary Margaret behind, but promises to see her the next day. Mary Margaret is unable to stand up for herself in this relationship at the beginning, so she allows David to use her and lie to her. Even as he leaves with his wife, Mary

Margaret smiles and is happy to have had a romantic moment with David. This is not a feminist representation of a romantic relationship because it instantly puts David in control. Mary Margaret is lost in her feelings for him, so she allows him to remain with Kathryn. Instead of showing a trusting and equal relationship, theirs is the opposite. David lies to both women and gets the benefit of being with both while they suffer. Mary Margaret allows this to happen because she is so in love with him that she forgives every mistake.

In the middle of the first season, Mary Margaret struggles with standing up for herself in her relationship with David. As David continues to lie to her about leaving Kathryn, Mary Margaret is unsure about how she feels towards the relationship with David. At times she devotes herself to David, and at times she tries to distance herself from him. In Episode 10, Mary Margaret demonstrates this struggle. In the beginning, she shows her dependence upon David. This episode begins with Mary Margaret rushing out of the bathroom where she lives brushing her teeth exclaiming that she is late for work. Emma challenges this stating that Mary Margaret still has thirty minutes before she is supposed to be there. Mary Margaret leaves in a hurry. The audience then sees that she went to Granny's diner, not work, at 7:15 am looking very stressed and rushed. She quickly pulls out a book and pretends to be complacently reading when David walks into the diner. As he goes to the register and orders two coffees, Mary Margaret stares dreamily at him; the audience is meant to realize that Mary Margaret was not rushing because she was late to work, but because she was late to seeing David. David then turns and notices Mary Margaret. They share some pleasant hellos as Mary Margaret stares dreamily into his eyes and smiles largely. David then leaves the diner and we see him hand his wife, who was waiting in the car, a coffee and kiss her. Mary Margaret looks disappointed as Emma walks up and states, "Late for work, huh?" As Emma sits at the table with Mary Margaret, Mary Margaret admits, "He comes here every morning at 7:15 A.M. to get coffee . . . I

just like to come here and see him . . . I can't get him out of my head." Here, the audience sees that she is reorganizing her life for this man. Her life is completely focused upon seeing David and hopefully getting him to leave Kathryn to be with her. Mary Margaret is shown as having no control over her feelings for David when she says she "can't get him out of [her] head." The feelings she has for David force her to make irrational choices and put other parts of her life on hold while she focuses solely on getting David to love her. By depicting her in this way, Mary Margaret is shown as having no control over herself and being dependent on a male for happiness.

Later in Episode 10, Mary Margaret shows her struggle with developing her agency in her relationship with David. In this scene, Mary Margaret has been struggling with her feelings towards David because he is married, yet they are developing a romantic interest towards one another. Mary Margaret is attempting to ignore David and move on, but she is pulled towards him and just can't seem to walk away from him. This is already problematic because it shows how Mary Margaret cannot make the decision to leave David even though she wants to. She is cursed with uncontrollable romantic feelings, which govern her life. In this episode, Mary Margaret finds a trapped pigeon and learns from a vet at the animal shelter that this pigeon needs to be reunited with her flock or it will spend the rest of its life alone. David also works at this animal shelter, so he hears the conversation. The two have a conversation where David states, "Mary Margaret, there's a storm coming. You really shouldn't go out there" when he sees that she is heading out to reunite the pigeon with its flock. Here, the audience sees that David is attempting to make the decision for Mary Margaret about trying to save this pigeon's life. Mary Margaret replies, "Well, the storm's coming tomorrow, and if I wait, she could be lost forever, completely alone. No one deserves that." With this response, Mary Margaret does claim some

agency for herself by rejecting his advice and making her own decision. David feels as though he cannot change her mind, so he offers to try to help, “Then let me drive you.” Again, Mary Margaret seems to show her control and agency when she claims, “I don’t need your help, David. I’ll be fine.” While this interaction looks like Mary Margaret has control over her life and makes decisions independent of a male character, this is disrupted later in the episode.

As Episode 10 progresses, Mary Margaret regresses back to being dependent on David. At 21:23 of the episode, Mary Margaret, out in the woods returning the lost pigeon, is startled by a thunderclap from the storm and slips and falls off a cliff, hanging on for dear life. In this moment, the audience sees that David, the male character, was right about two things. There was a storm coming, and Mary Margaret should have asked for his help. The agency that was previously given to Mary Margaret when she stood up for herself and decided to go on this journey alone is taken away in this fall, showing the audience that she cannot follow through with her decisions without the assistance of a male character. This moment also shows how when Mary Margaret attempts to have agency, she is instantly punished by being thrown off a cliff. As Mary Margaret hangs off the cliff’s edge screaming and looking terrified, helpless to save herself, David suddenly appears and lifts her up off the cliff. This represents Mary Margaret’s inability to save herself and her reliance on male characters for survival. She was unable to do anything in this situation to save herself, making her dependent on David for survival. Her agency is taken away here as well because she is now depending on David instead of herself. As soon as David pulls Mary Margaret to safety, he states, “Did you really think I’d let you come out here alone?” This scene upholds the ideals perpetuated in society that females need a male to save them and that males always know what is best for the female. This line takes away her control because David states “let you.” David lets her, or doesn’t let her, make

decisions depending on what he feels is right. Any agency that Mary Margaret thought she had was allowed by David, which means that he is ultimately in control.

As the scene progresses, David rids Mary Margaret of any control she thought she had. Mary Margaret continues to try to save the pigeon, but David ultimately convinces her that she cannot do it. He leads her to a cabin for protection against her wishes, taking with him the last of Mary Margaret's agency. This scene demonstrates how Mary Margaret is cursed with being dependent on David for her life, happiness, and decisions. She struggles to control her own life, ultimately being forced into following whatever decisions David makes for her. David disguises his actions as caring for Mary Margaret, but he is really looking out for himself and his desires for a romantic relationship with her. In this scene, we see the struggle Mary Margaret shows with having agency over her life while stuck in a society that upholds the traditional gender roles. Her struggle represents the struggle females have in gaining agency in society.

By Episode 12, Mary Margaret really begins to stand up for herself in the relationship with David. She is tired of hiding their relationship from everyone. David makes a huge mistake when he hands Mary Margaret the wrong Valentine's day card (1.12 29:11). Mary Margaret greets David with elation when she sees him and is flattered when he hands her a Valentine's day card. However, when she opens it, she reads, "Kathryn I woof you" (1.12 29:33). Instantly, her face becomes sullen as she realizes that David has played her. Instead of allowing herself to continue to be tricked, Mary Margaret stands up for herself and tells David that this is not how they should be together. She tells him, "I think you should go home to Kathryn" (1.12 30:01). She tells David that she hopes they can find a way to be together and then she leaves. In this scene, Mary Margaret is finally standing up for herself in this relationship. She is recognizing that David is not fulfilling her needs in the relationship because

he is with another woman. Mary Margaret tells David that their relationship cannot continue like this, which pushes him to find a solution. When she walks away, she does not swoon over him or forgive his past indiscretions; instead, she leaves him alone with the understanding that he must leave Kathryn to continue with the relationship. Mary Margaret shows how she can stand up for herself in a relationship and demand to be treated better.

By the end of the season, Mary Margaret has grown enough to finally able to tell David that their relationship is over. Throughout Episodes 15-18, Mary Margaret comes under suspicion for the murder of Kathryn, as discussed previously. When she is accused of murder, only Emma supports and believes Mary Margaret. Instead of standing up for Mary Margaret, David begins to believe that she killed Kathryn. This hurts Mary Margaret deeply and helps her realize that she cannot depend on David. By the time she is cleared of the murder in Episode 19, she is long past her love sickness. Mary Margaret is able to look at all aspects of the relationship with David and concluded that they should not be together. David calls to Mary Margaret as she walks past him, but she walks purposefully on (1.19 23:23). She does not hesitate in her speed and marches by, showing that she does not want to pay him any attention. She puts herself in a powerful position by not stopping for David or slowing down. He is forced to follow her and speak to her as she heads towards her car. Before she enters her car, Mary Margaret turns to David and says, “You know I will never forget that moment. The moment the world sort of blows you backwards and the one person you thought would always be there to catch you, he isn’t there” (1.19 23:56). She is finally telling him how she truly feels. Mary Margaret has realized that David has not been there for her when she needed him the most. She was there for him when everyone thought he murder Kathryn, but then he wasn’t there for her. David replies to her stating, “I’m sorry but we have to move forward,” to which Mary Margaret states, “But we

can't" (1.19 24:16). In these lines the audience sees that she is ending their relationship. All the obsessing is over. She finally realizes that he has not supported her as much as she supported him. This inequality in the relationship is what upsets her the most. Mary Margaret demonstrates agency when she ends the relationship with David, understanding that she is not being treated fairly. His change is representative of how women in a patriarchal society can fight against inequality in romantic relationships and demand to be treated better.

The next time Mary Margaret and David see each other is in the last episode of the season where we see Mary Margaret continue to stand up for herself. By the end of the season, Mary Margaret is making decisions that will benefit herself, versus David. In the final episode, David comes to Mary Margaret one last time to ask for her forgiveness and request to be together. After he apologizes to her, he asks her to give him a reason to stay in Storybrooke. Mary Margaret replies with "I can't" (1.22 10:00). She then gets into her car. Mary Margaret stays strong and does not let David convince her to take him back. While he is finally admitting to his mistakes, it is too little too late. In this moment, Mary Margaret demonstrates the strength women have in relationships. Mary Margaret deserves to be an equal partner in the relationship instead of constantly giving into David's needs and desires. When she realizes that David will not be able to make her happy, Mary Margaret is able to walk away. This couldn't happen in the beginning of the season because she was cursed with having to serve his interests in their relationship instead of her own. When she is finally able to leave the toxic relationship, she shows a more feminist and equal portrayal of the relationship.

Another relationship in this season I want to focus on is the relationship between Emma and Mary Margaret because Emma is an integral part to ending the curse. This relationship is a bit strange because of the disjointed timeline of the show. Since time in Storybrooke never

changes, Mary Margaret has not aged in the 28 years since she placed her baby, Emma, in the tree to teleport to safety during the curse. Emma is Mary Margaret's daughter, even though they look as though they might be the same age. When Emma comes to town in Episode 1, she sets in motion a series of changes that help break the curse at the end of the season.

In the beginning of the season, Emma comes to Storybrooke because her biological son Henry finds her and lures her there. He knows she is the key to breaking the curse and he works to convince her to stay. When she arrives, Mary Margaret sees how much Emma's presence helps Henry. In Episode 2, Mary Margaret tells Emma that she should stay in Storybrooke. Emma and Mary Margaret seem to have a close bond immediately. Later in this episode, Regina has Emma arrested for breaking and entering. Mary Margaret is the only person who believes Emma is innocent and she bails her out of jail. This is where the audience sees their relationship begin to strengthen. Emma is Mary Margaret's first positive female interaction that we see. Mary Margaret is able to develop trust and a connection with another female character that is not based upon obligation or jealousy. Their relationship is based upon mutual support which continues throughout the season.

There are many times when the conversation between Mary Margaret and Emma passes the Bechdel test. Mary Margaret and Emma can have conversations that focus on many topics, such as friendships, family relationships, and career opportunities. There are also times when they do speak about romantic relationships. I believe that this offers a feminist view on their relationship because they are free to talk about many situations in their lives, not just romance.

When Emma and Mary Margaret speak about men, it is a supportive discussion. Emma helps Mary Margaret to develop her power in the relationship with David. For example, in Episode 6, Emma advises Mary Margaret to stay away from David because he is married. At this time, Mary Margaret is weak in her relationship with David and unable to stand up for

herself yet. She knows she shouldn't be with a married man, but she is not strong enough to say no and demand that he leave his wife. Emma pushes Mary Margaret to stand her ground, demonstrating to her how she should act in this relationship. Mary Margaret is not ready to accept Emma's advice at this early stage, so she ignores Emma's guidance. Emma is supportive of Mary Margaret's choice to stay with David even though Mary Margaret tries to hide it from her. In Episode 10, Emma catches Mary Margaret waiting to see David get coffee at Granny's diner (3:43). Mary Margaret is surprised and embarrassed when she is caught by Emma, but Emma reassures her that it is fine by stating, "I get it." In this moment, Mary Margaret lets her guard down and tells Emma that she has been coming to Granny's every morning to see David get coffee. Emma is understanding but helps Mary Margaret see that she is "stalking" David and that it is not healthy (1.10 4:00). The audience sees Emma supporting Mary Margaret here, again demonstrating a close relationship between two females. Emma helps Mary Margaret concluded that David is getting coffee for his wife, and Mary Margaret shouldn't be waiting here for him.

In Episode 13, when Mary Margaret confesses to Emma that she didn't follow her advice to stop seeing David, Emma is again supportive of her. She tells her that she already knew (1.13 8:20). Emma states, "I just figured that you would let me know when it was time" (1.13 8:34). Emma offers unwavering support to Mary Margaret, helping her to see that she does not need to rely on David for love and support. By continuing to be there for Mary Margaret, despite all her mistakes, Emma shows her a love that she has never experienced before. Mary Margaret is able to stand up to David later in Episode 13 because she knows she has the support of Emma and will not be left alone. Emma helps Mary Margaret grow to understand that relationships should not be one sided. Instead, they should show equality and never-ending support.

This never-ending support is tested when Mary Margaret is arrested for Kathryn's murder. When she is in jail, everyone in the town (David including) turns their backs on her and believe she murdered Kathryn. The only character that supports her is Emma. Regina frames Mary Margaret, and even with all the evidence supporting the idea that she killed Kathryn, Emma still believes in Mary Margaret's innocence. I believe that Emma stands up for Mary Margaret because Mary Margaret had stood up for her in Episode 2. When everyone thought Emma was guilty of breaking and entering in the beginning of the season, Mary Margaret felt she was innocent. Emma can reciprocate this support by believing in Mary Margaret's innocence at the end of the season. Mary Margaret escapes from prison in Episode 17, but Emma finds her. Emma tries to convince Mary Margaret to come back, but she questions this. Mary Margaret asks, "Why is it so important to you what happens to me?" (1.17 37:51). Emma replies:

Because when Regina framed me, and you bailed me out I asked you why and you said you trusted me. And then when I wanted to leave Storybrooke because I thought it was best for Henry, you told me that I needed to stay because that was best for him. And I realized all my life I have been alone. Walls up. Nobody's ever been there for me except you. And I can't lose that. I can't lose my family (1.17 38:17).

In this quote the audience sees how close Emma and Mary Margaret have become. Both women support each other throughout this season. Emma helps Mary Margaret through her issues with David and being framed for Kathryn's murder. Mary Margaret helps Emma connect with others and break down her walls. Both women grow and learn from one another, and both women care about one another. This is a feminist representation of a female-to-female relationship because they are supporting and building each other up. This is a relationship based on positivity versus jealousy and conflict. In comparison to the Disney film, Snow White did not have any female

friends to support her. Mary Margaret can grow and develop because she has a positive relationship with Emma, which allows both characters to develop into stronger women. Her journey in the “cursed” world shows the way to achieving agency under the curse of patriarchy.

Throughout the first season, Mary Margaret’s character develops into more feminist representation. When she is cursed, she is locked within female gender stereotypes. Her beauty is taken away, thus taking away her only form of power. She is locked into a caregiver role and she is passive in her relationships with other characters. Mary Margaret is fearful of Regina, lovesick towards David, and jealous of Kathryn. These three relationships echo the relationships that Snow White had in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. As the season progresses, Emma inspires Mary Margaret to change. Through this powerful female relationship, both women support and guide each other towards success. Instead of having a relationship based on fear or conflict, they develop a close relationship based on trust and understanding. With this, Mary Margaret is able to overcome the challenges she is cursed with and stand up against the stereotypes put upon her. By the end of the season, she is able to stand up to Regina, have a positive relationship with a female character (Emma), and step away from the toxic relationship with David. These actions demonstrate a change in her character representative of her growth as a female. By the end of the season, she oversees her own decisions and does not let anyone push her around. Mary Margaret’s journey through the curse shows a way to navigate the curse or patriarchy and break it. She can return to her true self instead of being plagued by the curse of patriarchy.

Conclusion:

The revision of Snow White's character in *Once Upon a Time* is hopeful because it represents a change in society in how women are viewed. Women today can push back on gender role expectations and challenge commonly held beliefs. Disney's Snow White represents an outdated view of the female gender role, contributing to male dominance. As argued in Chapter 1, *Once Upon a Time* offers a new version of Snow White that ultimately changes how we view Snow White. By giving her a backstory and agency, the writers of the show demonstrate a new female example, but this time she is a hero. In *Once Upon a Time*, Snow White immediately is depicted in a powerful way. However, this leaves the audience with the question: How does a female gain agency? One of the wonderful things about the first season in *Once Upon a Time* is that this journey from non-feminist representation to a feminist one is shown through Mary Margaret's struggle. Chapter 2 argued that Mary Margaret was cursed to live a life without agency, similar to the original Snow White. As Mary Margaret develops a relationship with Emma, these two females push each other to become stronger. Mary Margaret's development is documented as she slowly learns to resist the patriarchy through her desire for equality. As her relationship with Emma develops, Mary Margaret returns to the strong feminist portrayal she was before the curse and the curse is broken. Her challenges and missteps along the way offer hope to females watching that they too can overcome their struggles while resisting patriarchy.

Fairy tales in particular offer a unique look into society's understanding of gender roles by depicting fantastical main characters. Kay Turner and Pauline Greenhill reflect on how the brothers Grimm's *Kinder-und Hausmarchen* (published in 1857 by Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm) offer children and adults important instruction in their book *Transgressive Tales: Queering the Grimms*. Turner and Kay argue that "despite the Grimms' repeated moves to expurgate sexual,

non retributive violence, and class-inappropriate references and interactions within the tales, these stories don't just provide instruction in compliant behavior for children but offer considerate significance for adults" (2). This means that fairy tales are important to our society for the ideas they perpetuate or challenge. Fairy tales are encapsulating the cultural issues of the time period and exposing the fears, desires, and dreams of the people. Another aspect brought up by Turner and Kay is the idea of enchantment and fantasy used within the fairy tale. The "acceptance of a magical world within the tales, allows for eccentricity and strange making. It also invites ambiguity and ambivalence, which often spill into the arena of sex and gender" (6). I believe that revised fairy tales are meant to question society's understanding of gender. By offering dynamic characters in a fantastic setting, such as Regina, Emma, and Snow White, *Once Upon a Time* is able to "suggest multiple meanings rather than illustrate one aspect of reality" (6). Through this, the show reveals alternative ideas to the female gender depicted previously in animated Disney films. Each of these characters can be read as different aspects of the female gender role today. Emma Swan represents a modern character trying to figure out herself in society. Snow White battles her previously held stereotypes from the animated Disney film to demonstrate a more independent and strong character. The Evil Queen challenges the notion of a bad woman and how women can redeem themselves in the eyes of others. Each of these characters offer alternative ideas to the fairy tale female character. Fairy tales are so important for representing cultural expectations, gender included, which is why Snow White's change in *Once Upon a Time* is so impactful. This rewritten fairy tale is updated to teach new values to children and adults in society.

In response to the updated characters, the producers, Adam Horowitz and Edward Kitsis, acknowledge their part in presenting powerful female characters to the audience. Horowitz and

Kitsis took part in an *LA Times* interview about their depiction of women characters titled “Once Upon a Time team: We show women who aren’t afraid of power” in *Fairy Tales in Popular Culture* edited by Martin Hallett and Barbara Karasek. In this interview, the writers demonstrate their purposeful attempts at being progressive. Here, Horowitz comments on their re-telling and borrowing of the animated Disney fairy tales, “We’re sort of trying to build out our own world and use these characters as the jumping off point for telling this larger story that we’re trying to tell about what is essentially a new fairy tale character – the child of Snow White and Prince Charming, Emma Swan, and how she gets embroiled in this huge battle of good versus evil.” The producers acknowledge here that they are relying on the previously created Disney world, yet deviating from the traditional stories told in these animated films. A purposeful decision is made here to change the way the new characters in *Once Upon a Time* are portrayed to tell a new story. This relates back to Zipes’ ideas on a revised fairy tale in *Fairy Tale as Myth, Myth as Fairy Tale*. The change in *OUAT* is more than a duplication; it is a revision. The writers have chosen to update and change the characters to portray a new story with women who are empowered. It does challenge the structures of the old fairy tales and “responds to changed demands and tastes of audiences” (Zipes 9). The writers are deliberately changing the old representations to challenge the existing story of Snow White and update her to fit within the present day. With Emma Swan, this new story unfolds as she comes from the old world of *Disney* but represents modern day meaning. Later in the interview, Horowitz also comments, “I’d say from the first scenes of the pilot, that’s what we were trying to do. Snow White pulls out a sword. We did not want to have the damsel in distress. We did not want to have the princess who needs saving.” Horowitz further exemplifies the decisions they were making in choosing to show the female character of Snow White in a new way that the previous Disney

film did not. They do not want her to be a weak figure that needs a male to rescue her. Here, the audience learns that the producers actively sought to make Snow White an independent character.

In response to a question about Belle's character in the show, Horowitz states, "With Belle, it's not just that she's beautiful, which she is, but she's a beautiful soul in every way." The producer is making the distinction that beauty is an afterthought of the female characters, not the forethought. A character needs to have a good personality in order to be received well by present day society. Rather than focusing on making the characters desirable to male figures, they are instead focusing on personality and actions. This reconstructs the audience's understanding of females moving from sexualizing them to empowering them. Furthermore, in an online article titled "Lost's Kitsis, Horowitz Start at The Beginning with *Once Upon A Time*" written by Josie Campbell, Kitsis reflects; "For us it was important that she's not a damsel in distress, that none of the women are, that they're strong women, that they're inspirational, which is why in the pilot you see Snow White with a sword when the Evil Queen comes in instead of hiding behind her husband" (Campbell). Through these two interviews with the producers, Kitsis and Horowitz make claims that they are creating their female characters intentionally independent. They are breaking the traditional stereotypes for what women in society should be by including strong female characters at the forefront of their show.

So why does this matter? It matters because Kitsis and Horowitz intentionally create female characters that change how we view the old Disney princesses. *Once Upon a Time* shows that we have more empowered representations of female characters. Ultimately, I feel this means that we as a society are slowly moving away from the patriarchal view of gender. The representation of Mary Margaret's journey shows that we are not locked into patriarchy, and that

women are more empowered than in the 1930s, when *Disney's* Snow White was created. This new feminist representation of Snow White and Mary Margaret in *Once Upon a Time* shows progress and a more equitable view on gender. Like Mary Margaret, females can find ways to resist this patriarchal view and claim power. Mary Margaret's rocky road towards agency and breaking the curse offers a pathway for women to overcome challenges placed upon them by stereotypes. I hope that by examining *Once Upon a Time's* Snow White and Mary Margaret, women and girls can see a path forward to gaining agency and obtaining gender equality.

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